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# HIS STORY

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How epic tales of the thunder god inspired real-life Viking valour

### SURVIVE A SIEGE

10 steps to outlast a  
Medieval invasion

### THIS IS HALLOWEEN

How the spooky celebration  
went from a pagan ritual  
to trick-or-treating

### CHINA'S COLUMBUS

Could Zheng He have  
reached the New World first?

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Future

ISSUE 057

Digital Edition



#### WHO BUILT THE PYRAMIDS?

Not slaves or aliens, but a  
city of master craftsmen



#### CATHAY WILLIAMS' FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

The gender-swapping  
buffalo soldier's struggle



#### BURKE & HARE: BODY SNATCHERS

Why the ghoulish grave  
robbers turned to murder

**PLUS** Frederick II's sadistic experiments **Battle of Vítkov Hill** The Congo Free State



#### How realistic is The Crown?

Historian Robert Lacey reveals the  
scandalous truth about the hit drama



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# DUNKIRK



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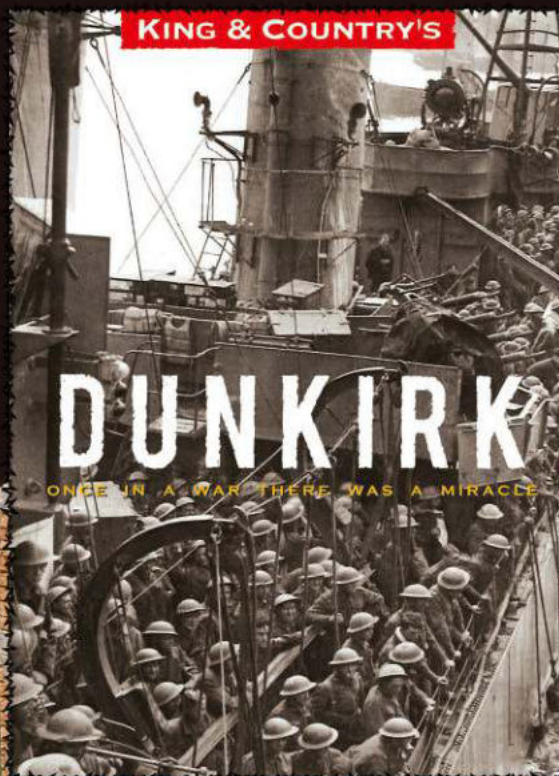


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### KING & COUNTRY HEADQUARTERS

Suite 2301, 23rd Floor, No.3 Lockhart Road,  
Wanchai, Hong Kong  
Tel : (852) 2861 3450 Fax : (852) 2861 3806  
E-mail : sales@kingandcountry.com

### KING & COUNTRY SHOP

245, Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Hong Kong  
Tel : (852) 2525 8603  
Website : www.kingandcountry.com

### KINGS X

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Find out how and why Cathay Williams disguised herself to join the Buffalo Soldiers from page 76

# Welcome

This is the first issue of All About History not to boast a historical figure on the cover. Instead, this month we've opted for a Norse god and we fill the pages with ghosts and ghouls. As well as uncovering Thor's mighty adventures, this issue you can trace Halloween's pagan roots; avoid mummies while exploring the Great Pyramid of Giza; meet a real-life Frankenstein in the form of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, infamous for his sadistic science experiments; and discover why the body snatchers Burke and Hare went on a murderous rampage in Regency-era Edinburgh.

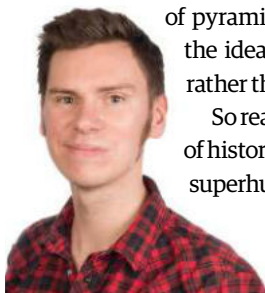
However, don't mistake us for having watched one too many horror films or getting over-excited eating all of our trick-or-treating chocolates. All About History remains 100% committed to fact

over fantasy. Our Thor feature is less interested in the mythological being, than the reasons why the Vikings told stories about the thunder god.

Our in-depth look at Halloween considers how the festivals we hold to remember the dead have changed down the years. Rather than lingering on the petrified pharaohs, we focus on the lives

of pyramid builders – shattering the idea that they were slaves rather than skilled artisans.

So read on to enjoy some of history's finest human, not superhuman, stories.



**Jack Parsons**  
Editor

## Editor's picks

70



### Survive a siege

10 steps to get ahead during an assault on your castle, from how to defend yourself to what to eat once the food runs low, based on real Medieval accounts.

82



### Battle of Vítkov Hill

Part uprising, part military action, discover the precursor to the Reformation that was the Hussite Wars with our step-by-step battle map of its first fracas.

86



### Heavy is the head

*The Crown's* historical consultant Robert Lacey discusses the truth behind the royal scandals and marital strife that feature in the hit drama about the Queen's life.

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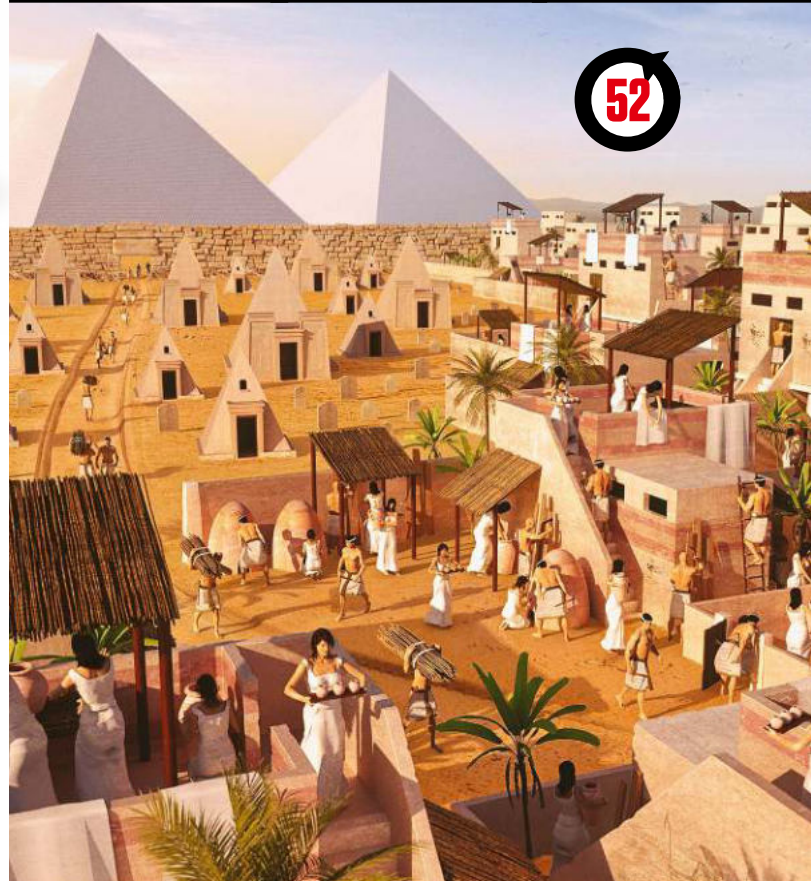
Discover the lost city of pyramid builders that assembled the Egyptian ancient wonders

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Medieval tips to keep an invading army out of your castle







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## ENJOYED THE MAGAZINE? SUBSCRIBE & SAVE 20%

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## HISTORY IN PICTURES

### STORMING THE PALACE

The Bolshevik Red Guards besieged the Winter Palace on 25 October, the seat of the provisional government in Russia's then capital, Petrograd. The palace was poorly defended and the seizure met with little resistance (despite what Soviet propaganda might later claim). With the Russian monarchy already overthrown in February, the success of the October Revolution led to the creation of the Soviet Republic.

1917









## HISTORY IN COLOUR

### THE YEAR OF THREE POPES

Karol Józef Wojtyła, Archbishop of Kraków, is elected as pope in the second papal conclave of 1978. He took the name John Paul II to honour his predecessor, John Paul I, who died after only 33 days in office, succeeding Paul VI who died in August. John Paul II was the first non-Italian to be elected in 455 years and the second longest-serving pope in modern history, with a reign of almost 27 years.

1978













## HISTORY IN PICTURES

### THE ELEPHANT IN THE GARDEN

The infamous Moulin Rouge cabaret club opened in Paris on 6 October 1889, offering a place for the very rich to slum it in a fashionable district. Famous for its raucous can-can dancers, this scene from the club's backyard cafe may seem genteel, but the giant stucco elephant was actually an opium den. For a single franc, you could enter by way of a spiral staircase inside the leg and be entertained by belly dancers.

1900









## HISTORY IN COLOUR

### BALHAM BOMB BLAST

A London double decker bus lies in a large crater the morning after a German air raid during the Battle of Britain, 15 October 1940. An armour-piercing bomb fell on Balham High Street, destroying the tube station underneath. Tragically, the station had been packed with people sheltering from the attack, 67 died. The number 88 bus, driving in black-out conditions, didn't see the massive hole until it was too late.

1940



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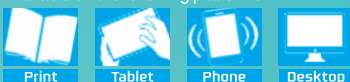


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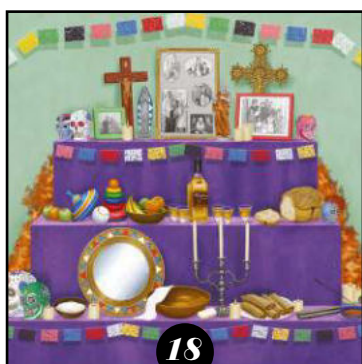
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# HALLOWEEN

From pagan rites to party games, discover how this festival of the dead has been reinvented and resurrected down the centuries



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# HALLOWEEN

## Halloween through history

Uncover the spooky past of the year's creepiest holiday from its Celtic roots to American pumpkins

### CELTIC NEW YEAR'S EVE

The Celts believed the dead could return at the end of summer so held the Samhain festival honouring deceased love ones and burning fires to repel evil spirits.



To protect themselves, Celts would dress up in ghoulish outfits to blend in with the spirits

600 BCE

### ROMAN REMEMBRANCE OF THE DEAD

Parentalia, a Roman festival of the dead, was held in February, with a week of reflection ending with the Feralia ceremony, where small offerings such as food and drink were left at ancestors' graves.



509 BCE

### GHOSTLY GOINGS ON

The late Victorian era enjoyed a golden age for ghost stories, with many read to scare guests at Halloween parties. This included Charles Dickens' *The Signal-Man*, Oscar Wilde's *The Canterville Ghost* and Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*.



### LET'S GO MUMMING!

Rather than offering to pray for deceased



relatives' souls, Victorian children go door to door in fancy dress performing folk songs, dances or jokes in return for treats or money.

### JACK-O'-LANTERNS

As the Irish flooded America following the potato famine, they brought their secular customs with them. However, finding pumpkins much easier to cut than their traditional turnips, the indigenous squash became the face of Halloween.



1880S

19TH CENTURY

1840S

### THE GREAT DEPRESSION

The economic downturn during the 1930s brought the Halloween celebrations crashing down. Cases of vandalism rose significantly as pranksters turned to mischief to extort treats out of people.



1929

### TRICK-OR-TREAT FOR CHARITY

\$17

Amount raised by the Allison family in Pennsylvania in the first trick-or-treat charity drive in 1950. That's about \$170 in today's money



3.5 MILLION

Number of children who were trick-or-treating for donations by 1969



\$188 MILLION

The amount that has been raised for UNICEF trick-or-treating so far



1950

### SUGAR RUSH

After WWII, sugar rations were lifted and Halloween celebrations saw a huge surge in the United States. Sweet sales soared as national advertisements specifically targeted Halloween, replacing fruit as the much-loved 'treats'.



1953



## THE POMONA FESTIVAL

Named after the goddess of orchards and the harvest, this festival merged with Samhain as the Romans conquered the Celts. Apple bobbing as a form of fortune telling is associated with the Pomona.



## CHRISTIAN ADAPTATION

As Christianity was embraced across Europe, pagan festivals began to fuse with Christian holidays. Pope Gregory III moved All Saints' Day from May to 1 November, in line with Samhain.



## SOULING

Throughout the Middle Ages, children and the poor would offer prayers for deceased relatives in exchange for money or food each year on All Souls' Day.



43 CE

C.731

1100

## GUY FAWKES DAY

Post-Reformation, souling was frowned upon as a Catholic practice. In England, it is replaced with Guy Fawkes Night on 5 November, a celebration of a foiled plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament.



Effigies of Guy Fawkes would be paraded down the street and burnt on bonfires

## GHOULISH PLAYS

William Shakespeare includes a reference to the practise of going door to door at Halloween in his play *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, describing a character who is clearly in love as "to speak puling, like a beggar at Hallowmas."



## DAY OF THE DEAD

As the Spanish conquistadors occupied Central America, a new holiday mixing Catholic traditions with Aztec ritual emerged. Día de los Muertos is still celebrated in Mexico to this day.



1605

C.1593

1519

## KING OF HORROR

10

The number of horror novels Stephen King wrote in the 1980s alone

The number of novels he has published to this date, both in horror and other genres

54

350 MILLION

The amount of copies sold worldwide



## A HOLLYWOOD HALLOWEEN

Americanised Halloween traditions were exported back to the UK, partly as a result of horror-themed movies.

Classics include the original *Ghostbusters* and the *Halloween* film series.



## FREAKY FUNDS

\$6.9 BILLION

spent by Americans on Halloween in 2015



70%

of Americans wore Halloween costumes.

41.2 BILLION

The number of potential trick-or-treaters aged 5-14.



1980

1980S

2015





## HALLOWEEN



# DEAD OF THE DEAD ALTAR

MEXICO, 16TH CENTURY - PRESENT

The Day of the Dead – or Día de los Muertos in Spanish – is a holiday that celebrates the deceased. Though marked throughout Central America, it's best associated with Mexico, where it combines indigenous pre-Colombian rituals with Catholicism, brought to the region by Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century. The holiday stems from an ancient belief that the dead briefly return home to visit their ancestors and celebrants lay on food, drink and entertainment for their honoured guests.

While it is called a day, festivities are actually spread out over a month, starting with the living gathering in graveyards to invite the dead to return to Earth in mid-October. It continues until 30 November when the gates of heaven are supposed to be shut once more. However, most of the activity takes place across the first two days of November, All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day in the Catholic calendar.

During these two days, even those who live far away will return to their family homes to celebrate the lives of departed loved ones. This starts with cleaning and decorating their graves as well as telling stories about them. At home, celebrants build ofrenda – altars that help guide the spirits of their loved ones home – and honour them with their favourite foods and possessions, including toys for children and even a drink of tequila or mescal for deceased adults.

There is no set rule as to how an altar should look or what it should contain. Some prefer a solemn, simple design with religious artefacts and candles, while others opt for an elaborate explosion of colour and decoration that includes marigolds, bunting and sugar skulls that are sold by the millions in markets leading up to the festival. Constructed on tables, benches and other sturdy objects, the more thought-out altars are built on different levels, symbolising heaven, Earth and the underworlds, while also containing elements of air, earth, fire and water.

### Paper decoration

Intricate designs cut into colourful crepe paper is a favoured way to decorate the altar itself, with the more colourful and elaborate designs the better. They can be simple geometric patterns or include religious iconography such as angels, crosses and, of course, being the Day of the Dead, stylised skeletons. These flags represent air in the four elements that make up the altar.

### Saints and loved ones

Usually taking the important position in the centre of the altar is a portrait of a saint with particular relevance to the family and a crucifix. Surrounded by this or even taking centre spot itself are framed pictures of the deceased friends and relatives being honoured during the Day of the Dead festivities.

### Children's menu

The spirits being honoured are of all ages, so while the adults have spicy food and sauces, the souls of dead children are accommodated with sweets and fruits. Some families also make tamales with fruit, or whatever food the souls enjoyed best in life. Typically the children's toys are also left out so they can play with them when they return on 1 November, before being removed before the adults return the following night.

### Marigold flowers

Sweet-smelling yellow and orange marigolds, called cempasuchil, are the flowers of choice for decorating Day of the Dead altars. They symbolise the fleeting lives of people, wilting after just a few days and guide the spirits to the altars with their bright colours and smells. An arch of the flowers often adorns the top of the altar, which represents the passage between life and death.

### Purifying the altar

As well as being a good accompaniment to the alcoholic offerings, a small bowl of salt is also important as a symbol of purification. Lit incense, specifically copal made from pine resin and housed in special burners, is also used to purify the surrounding air and to scare away evil spirits, as not all who came back on 2 November are welcome.







### Skulls and skeletons

The Day of the Dead's most well-known custom is people adorning their faces with make-up to look like skulls. Most altars wouldn't be complete without their own skulls, skeletons and coffins. But rather than have a sinister edge, these elaborately decorated sugar skulls are a reminder of the acceptance of mortality and a sweet treat and toy for the returning spirits. The practice of sugar craft may have been introduced by 17th-century Italian missionaries.

### Spirits for souls

A glass of water will quench the soul's thirst, but what about something stronger? A little harder than the wine used in communion, tequila and other spirits may be laid out on the altar if the souls of the dead had a particular love for Mexico's most famous beverage. Slices of lime and salt will complete the traditional tequila drinking practice, while a cigarette or cigar may also be left out for the souls.

### Bread for the dead

Unlike like the soul cakes baked in Britain and given to those offering prayers for the dead, pan de los muertos, or bread of the dead, is baked for the souls of the dead themselves. The bread can be oval or shaped like an animal or human, and is intended to sustain all the souls who visit the altar during the Day of the Dead.

### Favourite food

Offering up food to the dead is an ancient practice in many cultures and, as expected from Mexican food, the altars are adorned with some spicy delicacies. As well as the spirits' favourite foods and fruits, the altars commonly have traditional tamales made from corn or banana leaf husks and filled with meat and vegetables. A spicy, fruity sauce called mole, made with chilli, sesame seeds, chocolate and herbs, is also popular.

### Lighting the day

Votive candles are an important custom in Christian practices, being lit to symbolise prayers being said for another person. Made of beeswax or paraffin, these small candles light the path to and adorn the Day of the Dead altars. The flame represents the element of fire in the altar.





## HALLOWEEN

# THE Anatomy of

## A VICTORIAN GUISER

BRITISH ISLES, 1895

### GUISER

#### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Before trick-or-treating, there was guising. This was the Victorian name (from 'disguise') for children dressing up on All Hallows' Eve. In the early 19th century they might also be called 'soulers', a term that dated back to the Middle Ages when people would dress up as angels, devils and even the Virgin Mary during Hallowmas.

### TIN WHISTLE

#### POEMS AND PERFORMANCE

The trick aspect of trick-or-treating wasn't nearly as nefarious as it became in the 20th century as Victorian guisers would tell jokes, sing songs and play instruments like tin whistles to earn their treat. In Victorian times, guising wasn't considered any different from mumming or carolling at Christmas.

### TURNIP LANTERN

#### CREEPLY CANDLE

While jack-o'-lanterns made from pumpkins were an American invention, they have been made from turnips and other root vegetables in Britain and Ireland for centuries. Guising children would carry them to illuminate their evening revelries or place them in hedges to frighten passersby.

### MASK

#### SOULERS IN DISGUISE

Most Victorians would have known that dressing up to hide from malign spirits on All Hallows' Eve was pure superstition, but it was tradition. Masks would likely have been homemade and could be as simple as sackcloth with eyes and a mouth cut into it. This donning of a disguise was known as guising.

### SOUL CAKE

#### SWEET TREAT

Instead of candy corn or sickly festive sweets, Victorian guisers were given soul cakes. A hard cake dating back to the Middle Ages, they were more like biscuits made with spices and dried fruit. A form of alms for the poor, lucky children might also be given fruit, a few coins or even a tot of rum for their troubles.

### CLOTHES

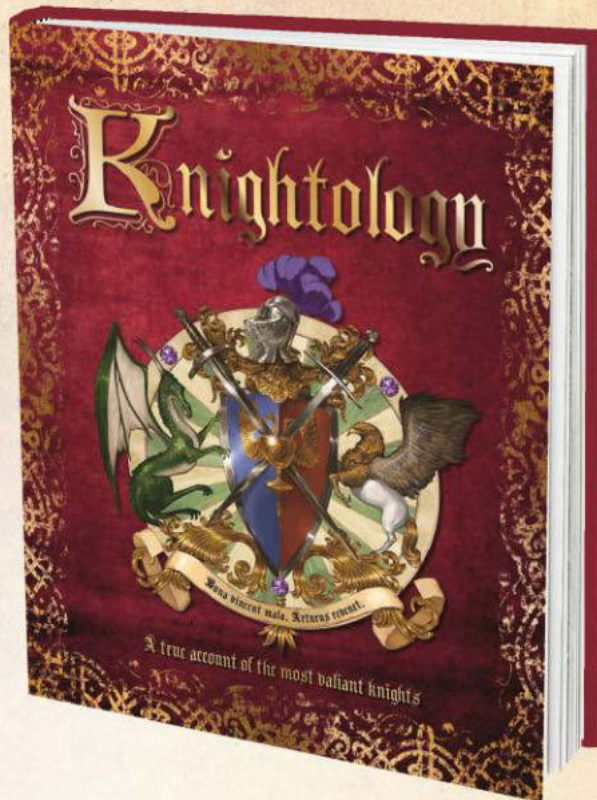
#### THESE OLD RAGS

Despite their name, most guisers didn't wear a disguise beyond their masks. There are drawings from the late 19th century dressed in hose and doublet as a call back to souling's Medieval roots, but most guisers were too poor to afford costumes so would have just worn their everyday clothes.

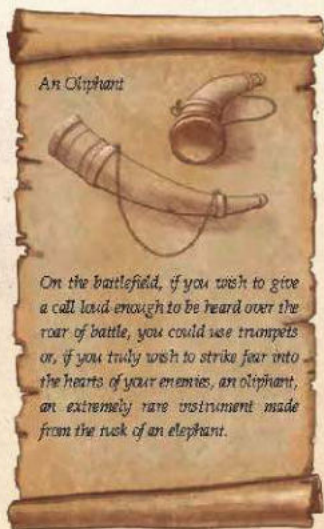




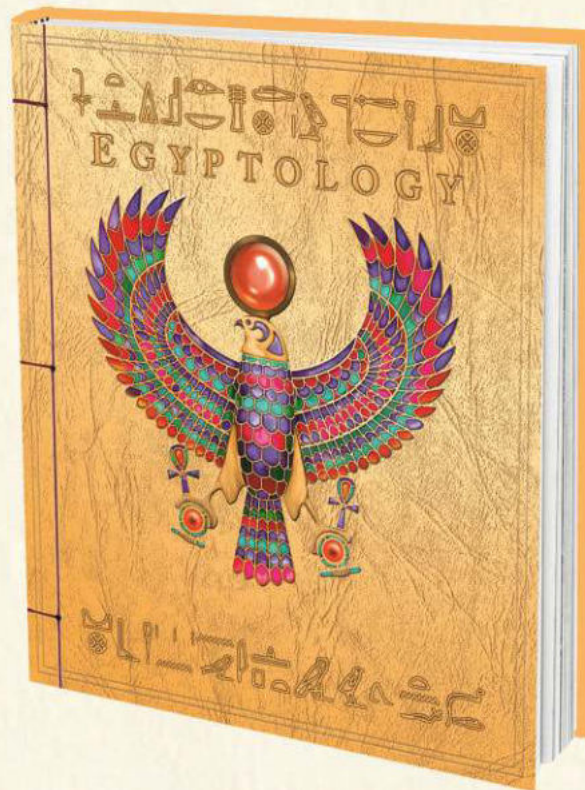
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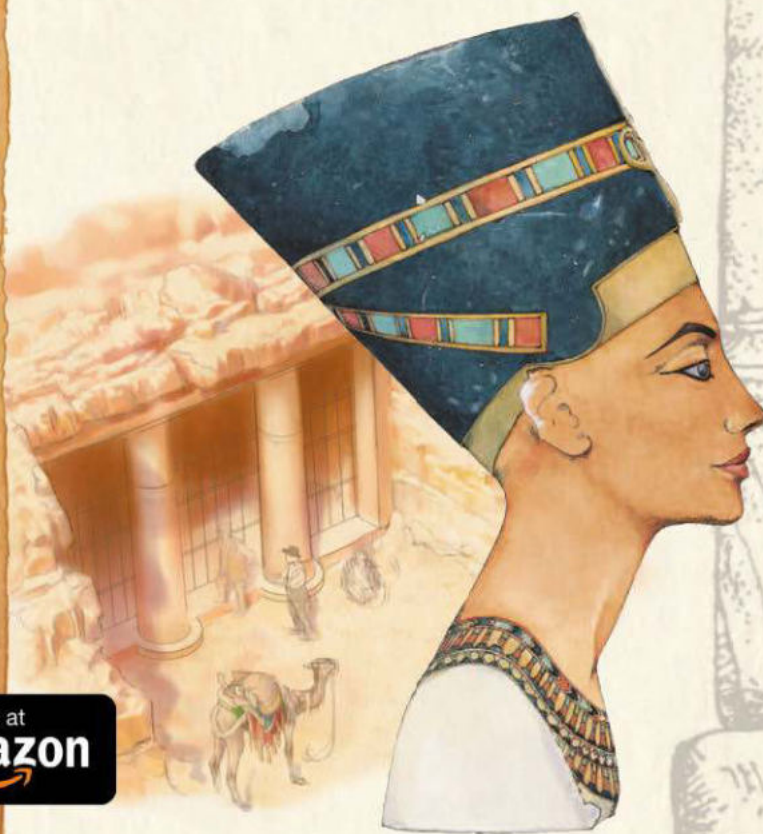
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**HALLOWEEN**

## *Day in the life*

# A DRUID AT SAMHAIN

THE PRIESTS LED LATE-NIGHT PAGAN RITES  
AND REVELS TO MARK THE CELTIC NEW YEAR  
BRITISH ISLES, 2ND CENTURY BCE

Halloween can trace its roots back to the Celtic festival of Samhain. A two-day event from 31 October to 1 November, Samhain (pronounced 'sow-in') celebrated the end of summer and the harvest. The Celts believed that on the eve of the festival the dead returned to walk the Earth, along with more malign spirits. Bonfires were lit on hilltops to purify the land, defeat the evil ones and encourage the sun to return. It would be the responsibility of the druids, essentially the Celtic priesthood, to lead the festival's sacred rites, which included ceremonial dancing and fortune telling, as well as more relaxed feasting, drinking and merrymaking.

↓

## SACRIFICE ANIMALS

As Samhain was held at the end of harvest, farmers at this time of year would lead livestock home from summer pastures to their winter shelters. Many animals would also be slaughtered for the evening's feast, so druids may have been present to say a few prayers and offer some of the animals up to the gods as sacrifices.

⌞

## INSPECT COSTUMES

Celts believed the boundary to the Otherworld was at its weakest during Samhain, so the dead and other magical beings would be able to return to the human world. Celts would protect themselves from evil spirits by wearing animal heads and skins to disguise themselves as the dead. A diligent druid may wish to inspect these costumes and ensure that preparations for the night's festivities were running smoothly.

⌚

## LIGHT BONFIRE

As the sun set, the festivities would begin. Druids would light huge bonfires, which were believed to keep evil spirits at bay and encourage the sun to return after winter. In a more practical sense, it would act as a beacon that would bring people together from far and wide to celebrate. The druids would also lead ceremonial dances around the fire.



Samhain usually involved burning fires to keep evil spirits away







## PERFORM RITUALS

Over the course of the night, the druids would lead villagers in prayers to honour their gods and cast spells to ward off evil – sometimes even physically chasing the unwanted spirits out of the village. In contrast, the souls of deceased loved ones were welcomed, with food and drink even set aside for them to enjoy.

## ENJOY A HERBAL ALE

While Samhain was a religious festival, it was also a celebration. Villagers would share a communal feast, partake in a flagon or two of herbal ale and play noisy games. In between rituals, who would object to your local druid taking a break and enjoying the fun as well?

## READ FORTUNES

As well as being priests, druids were soothsayers and would take advantage of the perceived weakness in the veil to the Otherworld. This would include communing with the dead and other supernatural beings on behalf of celebrants, reading their fortunes and performing other divination rituals.

## REKINDLE FIRE

After the night's revelries, celebrants of the Samhain would take torches from the sacred fire back to their homes. They would put out their existing hearth fires and then rekindle them once more using the flame from the Samhain bonfire. This extinguishing of old fires symbolised the beginning of a new natural cycle.

## SCATTER ASHES

The next morning, druids would lead the scattering of the ashes from the Samhain fires over the fields. This practice was intended to keep evil spirits at bay, perhaps so they wouldn't curse the farmland. But it had the added benefit of fertilising the ground with the wood ashes' nutrients.







## HALLOWEEN

# How to CARVE A TURNIP JACK-O'-LANTERN

## TAKE THE CARVED LANTERN BACK TO ITS CELTIC ROOTS BRITISH ISLES, 18TH CENTURY

The image of a candle-lit carved pumpkin immediately conjures up images of Halloween celebrations. But jack-o'-lanterns have only been made from pumpkins since the 19th century, when the Irish moved en masse to America and discovered how easy the gigantic gourds were to carve.

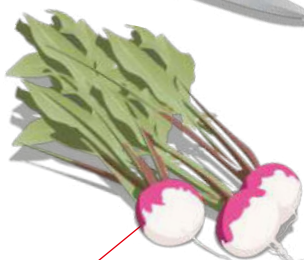
Before then, the lamps were made from root vegetables. There are examples of potatoes and beetroots being used in Britain and, to this day, carving sugar beets at Halloween remains a tradition in the north of France. But by far the most popular choice was the turnip.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED...

A SHARP KNIFE



TURNIP



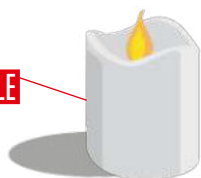
SPOON



PENCIL



CANDLE



### Choose your turnip

A well-sized turnip will be far easier to hollow out, not to mention make a more eye-catching display!

### Loosen the flesh

Using a sharp knife, cut a circle into the exposed flesh of the turnip, leaving a wall of about 1.5 centimetres.

### Make a lid

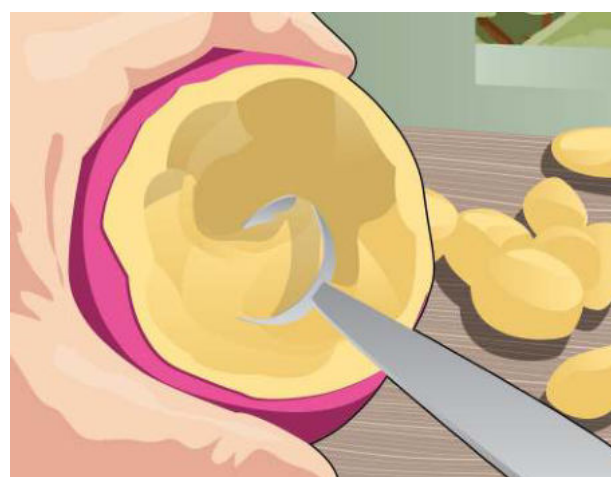
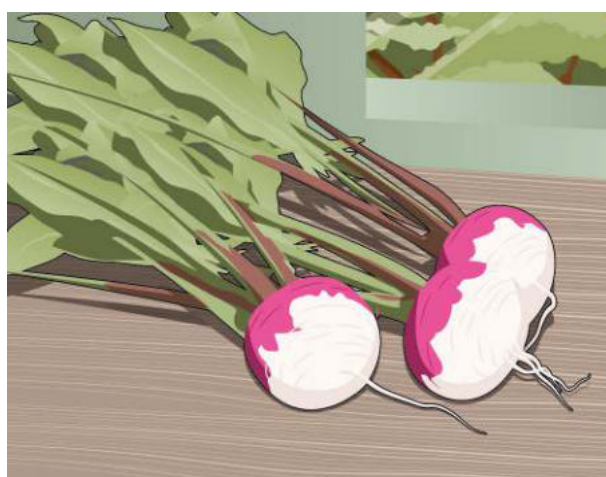
Slice off the top and put it to one side – this will be the lid of your lantern.

### Outline a design

With the tip of the knife, carefully make a chequerboard pattern into the exposed flesh. This will make it easier to dig out.

### Dig deep

Now you'll need some elbow grease. With a strong spoon, scoop out all of the flesh from your turnip until it's hollow.



## 01 PICK YOUR TURNIP

There's an art to choosing the perfect turnip for carving. Make sure that it's not so small that you skin your knuckles when hollowing it out and that it's big enough to make an imposing lantern. It always helps to choose a turnip that's as fresh as possible, too – you'll find that it'll last longer and smell a lot better.

## 02 REMOVE THE FLESH

Slice off the top of your turnip – this will become the lid – and, if necessary, level the base so it can stand upright. Now use a scoop, sharp knife or spoon to dig out the flesh until the turnip is hollow, leaving a wall of about 1.5 centimetres. It'll take a little muscle but you can use the waste to make a delicious supper.



## How not to... Make a traditional jack-o'-lantern

According to Irish folklore, the very first jack-o'-lantern was carved by a man known as Stingy Jack. Sometimes described as a blacksmith and other times as an outright thief, Jack made a bargain with the devil, which meant he was sent to limbo for his sins when he died. As one last favour, the devil tossed him an ember of hellfire. The lost soul placed this in a

hollowed-out turnip, which he then used as a lamp to light his way as he wandered the earth in search of a place to rest forevermore.

The story is almost identical to that of the more widely known legend of the will-o'-the-wisp. In fact, it's like both stem from a broader tradition of wandering spirits, which has its roots in Europe-wide, pre-Christian beliefs.



## 03 THE FACE OF HALLOWEEN

Using a pencil, draw a horrifying Halloween face on your turnip. In recent years, elaborate scenes have been carved into jack-o'-lanterns but preserved examples of early turnip carvings show that they were much more basic. So you can keep it simple or give your artistic expression free reign – it's entirely up to you!

## 04 BRING YOUR JACK-O'-LANTERN TO LIFE

Using a very sharp knife, cut out the face of your turnip, following your original pencil outline. Remember to take care while using the blade, though, or if you're too young to carve, ask someone to help; this is exacting work and you don't want to end up with a *real* Halloween horror show on your hands!



## 05 LIGHT THE FLAME

Now that your lantern is carved, put a candle inside. Once it's safely in place, carefully light the wick and watch your lantern's face blaze into glorious, terrifying life! You can choose whether to put the lid on or leave it open. Remember that if you do use a lid, you'll soon be able to smell lightly roasting turnip (yum, yum!).

## 06 DISPLAY YOUR LANTERN

Congratulations on carving your very own traditional turnip jack-o'-lantern! It's time to show off your skill, so put it out in your garden, in a window or on display whenever you choose. Now sit back and enjoy a perfectly terrifying Halloween, safe in the knowledge that you're helping to keep an ancient tradition alive!

## 4 HALLOWEEN OFFERINGS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE



### CHARYE ANCIENT TRADITION, SOUTH KOREA

South Koreans leave out a tasty Charye feast to the dead, with each dish individually positioned on the table according to tradition.



### BOWL-JACOB (AKA JACK-O'-THE-BOWL) ORIGINS UNKNOWN, SWITZERLAND

Leave Bowl-Jacob a dish of cream on the cowshed roof and he'll make sure the household runs smoothly from year to year!



### GOURD CARVING 12TH CENTURY, NEW ZEALAND

The Māori carved gourds for ritual and practical uses. To keep the spirits happy, there were strict rules governing the designs used.



### HUNGRY GHOSTS ANCIENT TRADITION, CHINA

A variety of foods are offered to appease the ègu, the restless and chaotic spirits of those who had led a wicked life.



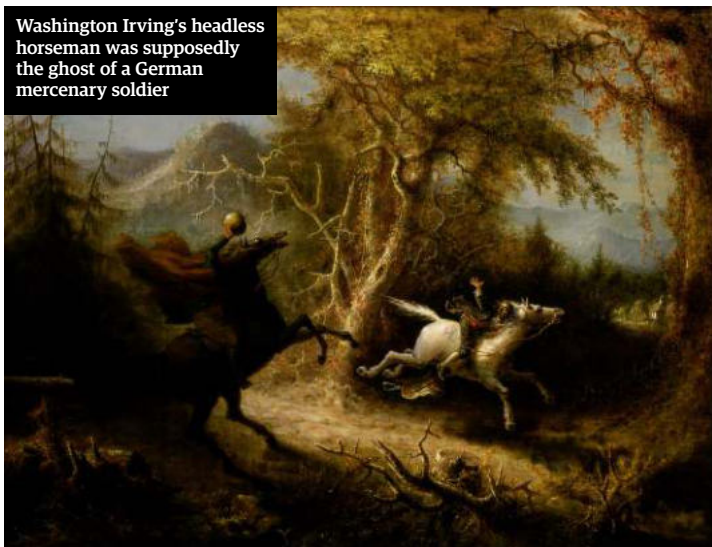


**HALLOWEEN**

# HISTORY ANSWERS

Send your questions to [questions@historyanswers.co.uk](mailto:questions@historyanswers.co.uk)

Washington Irving's headless horseman was supposedly the ghost of a German mercenary soldier



## Was Ichabod Crane a real person?

**Tom Aubrey**

Washington Irving's most famous story is the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, published in 1820. In it, the superstitious schoolteacher Ichabod Crane meets a ghostly headless horseman on his way home and is chased out of town.

There was a real person named Ichabod Crane who was a contemporary of Irving's. They both served in the War of 1812 and were stationed at the same Louisiana fort but we don't have any evidence that they actually knew each other.

Only one early photo of the real Crane still survives, but he doesn't seem to

have resembled his fictional namesake, which Irving describes as having a small, flat head, huge ears and a long 'snipe' nose. The real Crane was also a career soldier, not noted for either superstition or cowardice.

Irving did like to borrow unusual names, though. One of his essays mentions a man called 'Preserved Fish', who really did live in New York at that time. It's much more likely that Irving simply used the name but took his inspiration for the character from either Samuel Youngs or Jesse Merwin. They were both 19th-century New England schoolteachers that Irving met.

## How long has Mexico City hosted a Day of the Dead carnival for?

**Carly Dorean**

Since last year. Although Día de los Muertos is a tradition in Mexico and Central America, it is usually a private affair limited to family and close friends. Unlike New Orleans, Mexico City hasn't traditionally held a carnival on the Day of the Dead. But when the 2015 James Bond film *Spectre* included one in the opening chase scene, the city authorities decided to lean into it and host one for the tourists the following year.

Day of the Dead celebrations in Mexico are traditionally less raucous than a carnival



Thankfully, poisoned trick-or-treat sweets are virtually unheard of

## Has there ever been a real case of trick-or-treating sweets being poisoned?

**Cameron Florence**

While this is an urban legend that is told every Halloween, there has only ever been one case reported. In 1974, eight-year-old Timothy O'Bryan from Texas died after eating sweets laced with cyanide. Three other children, including the boy's sister, received the same poisoned sweets but didn't eat them.

However, this wasn't a case of a psychopathic neighbour randomly poisoning local children. The murder was quickly pinned on Timothy's father who had bought the cyanide and had a large insurance policy on his son. There is also a case of a child dying after eating his uncle's heroin stash, whereupon the parents sprinkled heroin on his Halloween sweets to protect the uncle.

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## HALLOWEEN

# Hall of Fame HISTORIC HALLOWEEN GAMES



As long as people have congregated to celebrate all things spooky, they've been unable to resist engaging in a little spirited fun...

## APPLE BOBBING ROME ANCIENT ERA

Perhaps the most famous Halloween game of all, next time you try to grab a floating apple from a basin full of water using only your teeth, spare a thought for the Roman settlers in England. For them, bobbing for apples was a serious business and a vital part of the festival of Pomona, a goddess of fruit trees and, of course, fertility. Young people gathered together to apple bob and the first to successfully catch an apple from the water would be destined to marry before the next festival.



## OUIJA BOARDS AMERICA 1891

In 1886, an American journalist wrote of a curious visit to the home of two Ohio ladies who showed him a 'talking board'. Through this simple device, they claimed, they could communicate with the dead. Shortly after this storied appeared, Maryland attorney Elijah Bond patented the Ouija board and they were sold in toyshops advertised as capable of answering questions "about the past, present and future with marvellous accuracy" – all for just \$1.50! Though its exact origins are uncertain, the Ouija board is indelibly linked to the spiritualism boom in 19th-century America. A perennial Halloween favourite, Ouija boards have terrified many a curious teen!

## BARMBRACK

IRISH 18TH CENTURY

Barmbrack is a traditional Irish sweet bread that is eaten all year round. However, at Halloween it turns into a game as a pea, a stick, a piece of cloth, a small coin and a ring were baked into the loaf. Each item, when received in a slice, was supposed to carry a meaning to the person it was given to. A pea would mean they would not marry that year; the ring signified that they would; the stick would indicate an unhappy marriage; the cloth would portend bad luck or poverty; and the coin promised good fortune or wealth.



## BLOODY MARY

ENGLISH 1960S

Stand before the mirror on Halloween night chanting 'Bloody Mary' three times and you run the risk of a vengeful ghost appearing with murder on her mind! Some claim the spirit is that of Mary I of England, or even Elizabeth Báthory, famed for bathing in a virgin's blood. Others say she was once Mary Worth, a witch with a penchant for slaughtering children. The game gained popularity in the 1960s but has its roots in centuries-old mirror divination, another popular Halloween pastime, which was supposed reveal your true love.



## THE WITHERED CORPSE

USA LATE 19TH CENTURY

What could be more fun than reciting a grotesque poem about a decomposing corpse? How about reading that poem aloud while blindfolded and being handed bowls of supposed 'body parts' that you have to identify from touch alone? From peeled grapes standing in for eyeballs to cooked spaghetti taking the place of ravenous maggots and the ever-popular blood made from tomato ketchup, this is sure to get any party started. A modern iteration of this game might involve food being placed in a 'mystery box' rather than the player wearing a blindfold.



What's inside — maggots or spaghetti?

## FLOUR MOUNTAIN

ENGLISH 19TH CENTURY

This simple but messy game starts as a neat mound of flour with a grape sitting on top of it. Players then take turns to cut away the flour bit by bit with a blunt knife. Whoever is cutting the flour when the mountain collapses has to retrieve the grape using only their teeth. A romantic variation of the game involves putting a gold ring inside the flour mound. The person who reveals it is destined to marry soon.



The flour game has variations all over the world

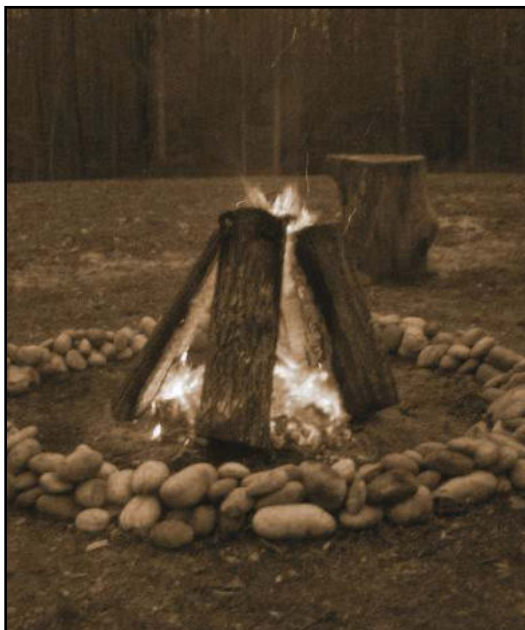


## APPLE PASSING

ENGLISH 18TH CENTURY

You're sure to know your fellow partygoers very well after you've played a few games of passing the apple. The object of this game is to pass an apple along a line of people without using your hands. As a festival associated with fertility and the end of the harvest, it's little surprise that apples were a big part of Samhain celebrations, and that tradition has continued into modern Halloween games.

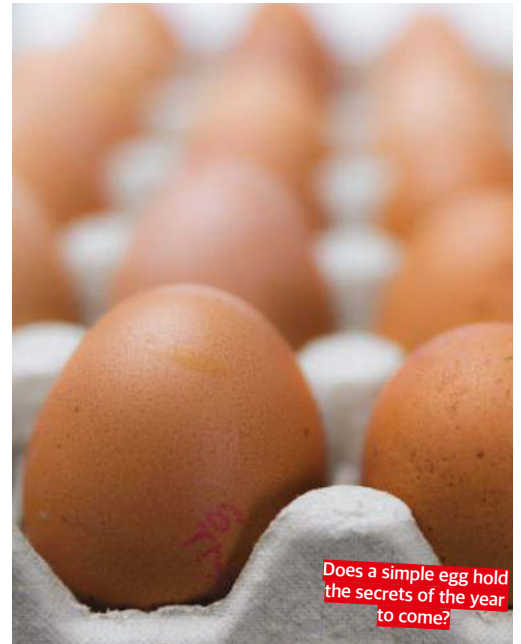
"It's little surprise that apples were a big part of Samhain celebrations"



## BONFIRE STONES

CELTIC ANCIENT ERA

Before going to bed for the night, write your initials on a white stone. Place it amongst other stones in a ring around a bonfire, then retire to let the fire die naturally. The following morning, seek out your stone and hope it has remained intact. A cracked stone means a year of bad luck awaits, but an unscathed one means glad tidings for the next 12 months!



Does a simple egg hold the secrets of the year to come?

## EGG WHITE DIVINATION

CELTIC ANCIENT ERA

It's not all apples when it comes to Halloween games, and this ancient Scottish game sees an egg white being dropped into a tall glass of pure water. The person whose fortune is to be told should cover the top of the glass with their hand for 60 seconds. Then, in an albumen-themed variant on reading the tea leaves, the shapes formed by the settling egg white are used to divine the future of the person in question.



A discarded horseshoe can bring you good luck... or bad!

## WEAL AND WOE

AMERICAN 18TH CENTURY

Once again, apples are a vital part of this Halloween game. Hang a horseshoe above a doorway and invite players to try and bowl an apple through it from a distance of about ten paces. Each partygoer gets three apples and three chances to perform the test of weal and woe. Those who succeed can look forward to enjoying a year of good fortune — those who fail can always try again after 12 months of bad luck!



# How to make... SOUL CAKES

## A TREAT TO DIE FOR BRITAIN AND IRELAND, MIDDLE AGES

**S**oul cakes are the original 'treats' in the Halloween tradition of trick or treat. They were first made in the Middle Ages to coincide with All Souls' Day on 2 November, when the dead were honoured.

Soul cakes were given out to poor 'soulers', who went door to door offering prayers in the form of songs and rhymes in exchange for the puddings. The tradition endured even after the Reformation, giving way to 'guising' in the 19th century and the more familiar trick-or-treating in 20th-century America.

Traditionally, soul cakes were baked like biscuits and marked with a cross. Some recipes suggest adding warm spices like nutmeg and cinnamon, but these would not have been included in the original Medieval dish as they would have been too expensive. Over time, recipes evolved with the addition of dried fruit and other tasty extras — for example, currants or sultanas can be used to mark the symbolic cross.

### Ingredients

- 340g plain flour
- 170g sugar
- 170g butter
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground mixed spice
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 egg
- 2 teaspoons white wine vinegar
- Optional sultanas or raisins
- Splash of milk

### METHOD

- 01** Begin your soul cakes by preheating the oven to 200°C/400°F and grease two baking trays.
- 02** Sift the flour into a large bowl and then add the spices and sugar. Give it a good mix.
- 03** Cut the butter into cubes and rub it into your dry mixture until it begins to look like breadcrumbs.
- 04** In a separate bowl, beat the egg and then add the vinegar.
- 05** Make a small well in the middle of the dry ingredients and the eggs and vinegar. Mix them together until you have a firm dough — you

might need to add a splash of milk here. Once it's all combined, cover the bowl and pop into the fridge to chill.

- 06** After approximately 20 minutes, your soul cake dough should be ready to roll. Sprinkle a little flour over your rolling pin and a flat surface to prevent sticking and roll the dough until it's about 0.5 centimetres thick.
- 07** Using a round pastry cutter, cut out circles and place them on the greased baking tray — it's up to you what size you'd like to make them. Using

a sharp knife, carefully score a cross on the top of your cakes. You can also use sultanas to decorate this.

- 08** Put your soul cakes in the oven to bake for 15 minutes — or until they are golden brown and smelling delicious!
- 09** Serve your cakes to trick-or-treaters who come to your door on Halloween as a traditional delicacy, or just enjoy them with a coffee on All Souls' Day knowing that a loved one's soul has been saved from purgatory.

### Did you know?

The premise of souling was very simple: 'a soul for a soul' — that is, for each soul cake given, the soul of a loved one would be saved from purgatory



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# THE CULT OF THOR

Revered by the Vikings, who was the god behind the superhero?

**WRITTEN BY  
GRAEME DAVIS**

Graeme Davis is a professorial research fellow at the University of Buckingham, a lecturer at the Open University and an English linguist specialising in Medieval Germanic languages and cultures.

**T**he thunder god Thor is probably better known these days as one of the Avengers in the Marvel comic books and movies. However, more than just a superhero, he was worshipped as an actual deity by the Vikings.

In Viking sources, Thor is usually described as the son of Odin by the giantess Jörð, who was an earth-mother figure, her name literally meaning 'earth', similar to the Greek Gaea. While Odin was the Allfather, the king of the Norse pantheon, his unpredictability and irrationality made him a god to be feared and appeased rather than admired and imitated.

Thor, however, had a common touch that gave him a mass appeal. He was a mighty warrior who could level mountains with his hammer Mjölner, but as a weather god he also



**"HE WAS A MIGHTY  
WARRIOR WHO COULD  
LEVEL MOUNTAINS"**

brought rain to water the crops. The many sagas featuring Thor show him exhibiting the qualities Vikings most admire, such as courage, loyalty and lust for life. In fact, it can be argued that it was Thor's heroic efforts that hammered home Norse morality to the Vikings and taught them to admire these qualities at all.

## **NORDIC ORIGIN STORY**

The earliest traces of Thor go back 700 years before the Viking Age. In his book *Germania*, the 1st-century Roman historian Tacitus writes about the gods worshipped by the Germanic tribes east of the Rhine. Like many Roman writers, he equates German gods with his own: Hercules, he says, was "above all other heroes they extol in their songs when they advance

to battle." The Germans called this god Donar and he was a god of thunder, carrying a club like Hercules, which is probably why Tacitus conflated the two.

Donar's association with thunder led to later Roman writers equating him with Jupiter, the thrower of thunderbolts. Two centuries before the first Viking raids, the Anglo-Saxons brought their pagan religion to England and among their gods was Thunor.

One of the main sources of surviving Norse myth is the *Prose Edda*, written by the Icelandic historian Snorri Sturluson. However, Sturluson was a Christian and didn't try to record these tales until the 12th century and, as such, his retellings of the pagan sagas are full of daring exploits but have been purged of pretty much all of their religious content. More

than once they also begin to stray into the realm of farce.

The enchanter (and giant) Útgarða-Loki tricks Thor three times: he wrestles an old woman who is age personified and against whom no one can win; he tries to pick up Útgarða-Loki's cat, which turns out to be the Midgard Serpent transformed; and he fails to empty Útgarða-Loki's drinking horn because it is connected to the ocean. In another tale, Thor disguises himself as a bride to take his hammer Mjölnir back from the giant Thrym.

Other adventures are more heroic but equally lacking in any religious context. Whatever the pretext — whether it be an insult, a duel, the theft of his infamous hammer, or simply a raid into the giant lands of Jotunheim — Thor slays a huge hero before fighting his way





An illustration of Thor from an 18th-century Icelandic manuscript

Offerings are made at a wooden idol of Thor by native Scandinavians



out through an army of unnamed giants and slaughtering them all.

Thor's relationships with the other gods are barely sketched in. He is married to the goddess Sif, with whom he has a daughter, and two sons by other mothers. Almost nothing is known of Sif – she may have been a fertility goddess, with her golden hair representing a bountiful harvest – and even less of Thor's offspring. Their names mean 'strength', 'strong' and 'brave' but their deeds are unrecorded. Only Loki features significantly in Thor's legends, causing trouble and being imprisoned until Ragnarök.

## WORSHIPPING THE THUNDER GOD

Viking sources only tell us a little about how the Norsemen worshipped Thor, and early Christian writers – who can hardly be expected to be impartial – focus on bloodthirsty tales of human and animal sacrifice. The *Eyrbyggja Saga* tells of the early colonisation of Iceland in the 10th and 11th centuries and includes a rare Norse description of a pagan temple:

"It was a mighty building. There was a door in the side wall, nearer to one end of it; inside this door stood the posts of the high-seat, and in them were nails that were called the Divine Nails. The inside was a very sacred place. Right

inside, at the far end, was a chamber, the same shape as a church chancel these days. In the middle of the floor was a stand like an altar, and on this lay an arm-ring, weighing twenty ounces, and all in one piece; men swore all their oaths on this. Also on the stand was the bowl for the blood of the sacrifice, and in it the blood-twig – like a holy-water sprinkler – which was used to sprinkle the blood of sacrificed beasts. And all around the stand the gods (i.e., idols) were set out in that holy place."

The high-seat was a type of throne; in a Viking house, it belonged to the head of the household. Even more than the heart, the pillars of the high-seat seem to have been the heart of the household, and some were said to have been carved with Thor's image. In the *Landnámabók*, which also tells of the colonisation of Iceland, Thorolf Mostrarskegg threw his high-seat pillars overboard with a prayer to Thor and founded his new steading where the pillars washed ashore.

The *Flateyjarbók*, another Icelandic text, echoes the importance of the thunder god – his image sits in the place of honour between the idols of Odin and Freyr, larger than the others and adorned with gold and silver. It sits in a model of his legendary chariot, whose wheels make the sound of thunder, and the two immortal goats that pull it.

An 8th-century bronze plaque showing Thor fishing for the Midgard Serpent





**"HIS IMAGE SITS  
IN THE PLACE OF  
HONOUR BETWEEN  
THE IDOLS OF  
ODIN AND FREYR,  
LARGER THAN  
THE OTHERS AND  
ADORNED WITH  
GOLD AND SILVER"**

Christian writers mention Thor more often than any of the other pagan Norse gods. While he is often worshiped alongside others in the pantheon – most commonly Odin and Freyr – pride of place has always belonged to the thunder god.

The most extensive description of Viking religious practices comes from the 11th-century German chronicler Adam of Bremen. In Book IV of his *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, or *Deeds of the Bishops of Hamburg*, he describes a temple at the Swedish capital of Gamla Uppsala (Old Uppsala) around 1070, fairly late in the Viking Age. Once again, Thor is found sitting between Odin and Freyr in the place of honour. The temple is covered in gold and a huge golden chain runs around the roof of the building.

Outside the temple are a well into which sacrifices are thrown and a sacred grove whose trees are used to hang animal and human offerings at a festival that takes place every nine years. The sacred grove at Old Uppsala belongs to a long tradition. Tacitus writes about sacred groves in his *Germania*, and Saint Olaf of Norway and King Brian Boru of Ireland, both devout Christians, destroyed groves that were sacred to pagan Norsemen.

The archaeological evidence for the worship of Thor – and for pagan Norse religious practices in general – is disappointingly scanty. Archaeologists have searched in vain for any hint of the great temple at Old Uppsala: the surrounding area is littered with burial mounds dating back as far as the Bronze Age, but no trace has been found of the building described

## VIKING SOCIALITES

The three tiers of Norse society lay at the heart of their life and culture

A person's societal standing and primary figure of worship was dictated by which tier, or 'function', they belonged to.

Wealth and status varied widely within each class. An affluent farmer could own as much land as a poor jarl or he could be a tenant farmer working for a landowner

with only his legal rights to set him above the thralls. Women generally held the same status as their husbands or fathers and could own land, conduct business and take legal action in their own right. Their Christian contemporaries, on the other hand, were little more than chattels belonging to their men.

### JARLS

Jarls (linguistically related to the English word 'earl') formed the nobility. Kings were drawn from the jarl class, sometimes by election rather than succession – a weak or unpopular monarch could be replaced if the jarls could unite behind a rival claimant. In peacetime, they oversaw the efficient running of their lands; in war and on Viking raids, they commanded crew drawn from among the local farmers. Odin was the principle god of the upper classes and they would strive to emulate his wisdom, vast knowledge and creative spark.



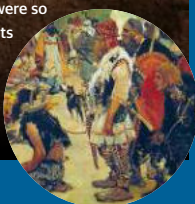
### NORSE MIDDLE CLASS

The Norse middle class was made up of free farmers, fishermen and craftsmen, and called bóndi or karls. In peacetime, they provided the goods and foodstuffs that kept society running; in war, they crewed the ships and made up the rank and file of Viking armies. A special subclass was the húskarls (house karls), who served a jarl or king as a personal staff and bodyguard. The gods of the middle classes had more homely and earthly values that mirrored their more physical lifestyle. As Thor was venerated for his honour and ability as a warrior, he was the obvious choice for the principle deity.



### THRALLS

Thralls were little better than slaves. Some were convicted criminals but the majority were captives brought back from raids. Slave raids against the Slavic peoples across the Baltic were so common that the word 'sclavus' replaced the Latin 'servus' in all the slave markets of Europe. Thralls had no rights – in Viking law, killing one was destruction of property rather than homicide. The religion of a thrall could vary and would have depended on where they had originated. Viking raiders bought and sold slaves anywhere from Ireland, Scandinavia, Byzantium and the Middle East.



#### Amulets

Lucky amulets were often shaped like Thor's hammer



#### Pendants

Carvings of Mjöllnir were used as pendants to show devotion to the thunder god



Arthur Rackham's 1910 portrayal of Thor from *The Rhinegold* and *The Valkyrie* by Richard Wagner



An illumination of Thor battling the Midgard Serpent from the 13th-century *Poetic Edda*

## "SOME HISTORIANS HAVE SPECULATED THAT THE THOR'S-HAMMER PENDANT WAS DEVELOPED IN ANSWER TO THE NEW FAITH"

by Adam of Bremen. Elsewhere, evidence of pagan Viking temples is maddeningly absent.

The most visible archaeological evidence of Thor's cult is the Thor's-hammer pendant but even that is less common than might be expected. Around 50 examples have been found across Scandinavia, dating from the 9th to 11th centuries – the same time that Christian cross pendants were spreading throughout Europe. Some historians have speculated that the Thor's-hammer pendant was developed in answer to the new faith.

A soapstone mould found in Denmark casts both crosses and Thor's-hammer pendants, while a silver pendant found near Fossi in Iceland can be interpreted as either – perhaps its owner was hedging his bets on which religion would come to dominate. In a similar vein, an iron Thor's-hammer from around the year 1000 was found in the Viking-ruled Danelaw of Yorkshire, bearing an inscription that begins and ends with a cross.

Several runestones call upon Thor to protect a person or an area, or simply to witness the carving of the runes and the raising of the stone. Other inscribed stones – including

Christian crosses such as one from Gosforth in Cumbria – are decorated with scenes from Norse myth and images of the gods. Thor and his hammer are common motifs. On crosses, these images are often found alongside the crucifixion and other Biblical scenes.

While the archaeological evidence for the worship of Thor is disappointing, the Icelandic sagas do offer a few glimpses into Norse religious life. They tell of festivals of animal sacrifice and feasting called blóts, which mainly took place in the winter. There were various blóts, including one dedicated to Freyr and another to the benevolent goddesses known as the *disir*, but there wasn't one for Thor. The *thorrablót*, which may have been invented in the 19th century, according to some scholars, was named after the month of Thorri (frost) in the pagan Icelandic calendar that ran from mid-January to mid-February.

There were many names for priests – *goði*, *gyðja*, *völva* and *seiðmaðr* are known – but there seems to have been no professional priesthood. Instead, community leaders like jarls also acted as religious leaders and these terms seem to refer not to the religious rank of



The Altuna stone from Sweden depicting Thor's fishing trip



## ASATRU Norse paganism in the new age

Named after the Æsir tribe of Thor and Odin, Asatru is one of several forms of Norse neo-paganism or Forn Sed (the Old Way). Vanatru reveres the Vanir tribe of Freyr and Freya, and Disitru worships the female spirits known to the Norsemen as *disir*.

All these movements developed from the *völkisch* Norse and Germanic mysticism of the 19th century. They gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s when many in the West were exploring

Indian, Celtic, Native American and other forms of mysticism. The Icelandic government officially recognised Asatru in 1972 and groups have grown up across Scandinavia and elsewhere.

Asatru seeks to reconstruct the pagan Norse religion, based mainly on the Eddas. Some of its followers also incorporate elements of shamanism, environmentalism, feminism and other political and philosophical elements according to their own

personal values and beliefs. Some are also Wiccans. There is no established dogma and individual points of view are encouraged.

So far, the movement is small. In 2017, the Icelandic Asatru Fellowship had fewer than 4,000 registered members but it is still Iceland's largest non-Christian religious organisation. In 2015, construction began on Iceland's first pagan temple for about 1,000 years; building is expected to finish in mid-2018.

A blót taking place in Iceland in 2009



Jörmungandr, the Midgard Serpent, catching Thor's bait



DE SUPERSTITIO. CVL. DAE MO.



Thor usually took pride of place in any imagery depicting Norse gods

bus Diis maioribus Gothorum.



The swastika could have been a symbol for Thor's hammer



Moulds and crucibles for making both cross and Thor's-hammer pendants



# The Cult of Thor

the individual, but to the religious activity in which they were involved.

The sign of Mjöltnir seems to have been more than decoration. Pagan Norsemen sometimes made a gesture indicating Thor's hammer as a sign of blessing or purification in much the same way that Christians made, and still make, the sign of the cross. The story of the death of Baldr has Thor using his hammer to bless the dead god's funeral pyre, and in the semi-comic tale of Thrym's wedding, Thor recovers his stolen hammer when it is laid in his lap to consecrate the supposed bride for marriage.

The Heimskringla reports that Haakon the Good, an early Christian king of Norway, was bowed by pressure from his people into making winter sacrifices during a blót at Hlader. When the drinking horn was passed to him, he made the sign of the cross over it to protect himself from the heathen nature of the proceedings.

Eyebrows were raised, but one of Haakon's friends defended him, saying that he was actually making the sign of the hammer, as they were all accustomed to doing.

While no surviving source tells us exactly how a Norseman would make the sign of Thor's hammer, we can assume from this account that it was very similar to the sign of the cross made by devout Christians today: presumably the hand moved in a T-shape.

The Arabic writer Ahmad ibn Fadlan tells of Swedish Rus making offerings to idols made of "a long upright piece of wood that has a face like a man's and is surrounded by little figures, behind which are long stakes in the ground," but gives no names. Given Thor's prominence in Viking temples elsewhere, though, it seems likely that he was worshiped in this way.

Thor also presided over oaths. In 876, Danish leaders in England sealed a peace with King

Alfred the Great by swearing on 'holy rings' associated with the worship of Thor – perhaps similar to the arm-ring mentioned in the *Eyrbyggja Saga* above.

Even after the advent of Christianity, the Norsemen were careful not to offend the god who controlled the weather. A man named Gaukathori, according to the Icelandic *Landnámabók*, "was very mixed in his faith; he believed in Christ, but invoked Thor in matters of seafaring and dire necessity." Gaukathori himself is quoted as saying to King (later saint) Olaf II of Norway, "If I must believe in a god, it is no worse to believe in the White Christ than any other."

Even with Snorri's religious bowdlerising, the *Prose Edda* shows Thor as an embodiment of many qualities that are traditionally associated with the Vikings. He is a peerless warrior, a fearless traveller and quick to avenge any



The temple at Gamla Uppsala devoted to the pagan gods



A 12th-century Swedish wall hanging of Odin, Thor and Freyr



A 1930 illustration of Thor by Katharine Pyle

## Choice

Because of the multi-faceted mould, smiths could create whatever their customers desired

## Mould

The casting mould held the shapes of Mjöltnir and Christian crosses



## Mjöltnir

Amulets like this brought the wearers protection and power

## Ambiguity

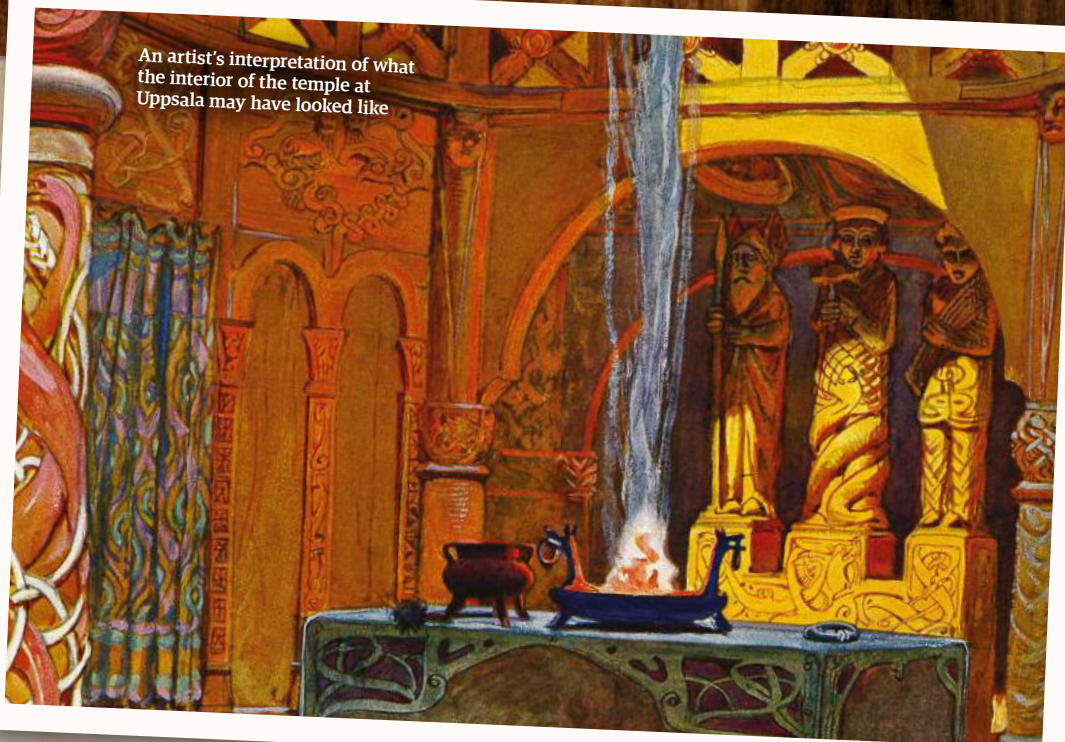
It is unclear whether some of the pendants are Christian or pagan



insult to himself or his Æsir tribe. He eats and drinks in heroic quantities and, while quick to anger, he is never petty or envious. Most of his expeditions to Jotunheim seem motivated by the love of a good fight rather than by any racial hatred of giants.

All these qualities – strength, courage, enterprise, loyalty and simple lust for life – were greatly admired by the Vikings and historical leaders who lacked any of them often drew criticism from the saga writers.

Thor's more straightforward approach to battle, seeming to revel in the joy of fighting, would have made him more appealing to the average Norse warrior to emulate in skirmishes. The unpredictable Odin was more esoteric in his role in combat, giving berserkers their battle madness, and the *Flateyrbok* tells of a kind of curse or spell in which a pagan king of Sweden invoked Odin to overcome his enemies in war.



An artist's interpretation of what the interior of the temple at Uppsala may have looked like

**"HE IS A PEERLESS WARRIOR, A FEARLESS TRAVELLER AND QUICK TO AVENGE ANY INSULT TO HIMSELF OR HIS ÆSIR TRIBE"**

A carved Viking funerary stone depicting some of the Norse pantheon



## THOR'S MIGHTY HAMMER

The truth about the thunder god's trusty weapon

Thor used his hammer, Mjölñir, to protect the Gods in Asgard from the giants as well as to watch over humankind. As a reflection of Thor, the embodiment of a storm, Mjölñir could produce thunder and lightning and also had a number of different magical properties, such as enabling Thor to fly, being able to shrink and the ability to restore life. Thor demonstrated this when he used Mjölñir to resurrect his goats after he initially killed them. Mjölñir is famed for never missing its intended target, returning to Thor's hand like a boomerang.

When the dwarves crafted the hammer, they mistakenly made the handle far too short. Thor wore iron gauntlets, known as *járngreipr*, to enable him to grip the handle firmly and a belt, *meingjörð*, to cope with the hammer's enormous strength, which doubled his strength and therefore made it easier for him to wield his mighty weapon.

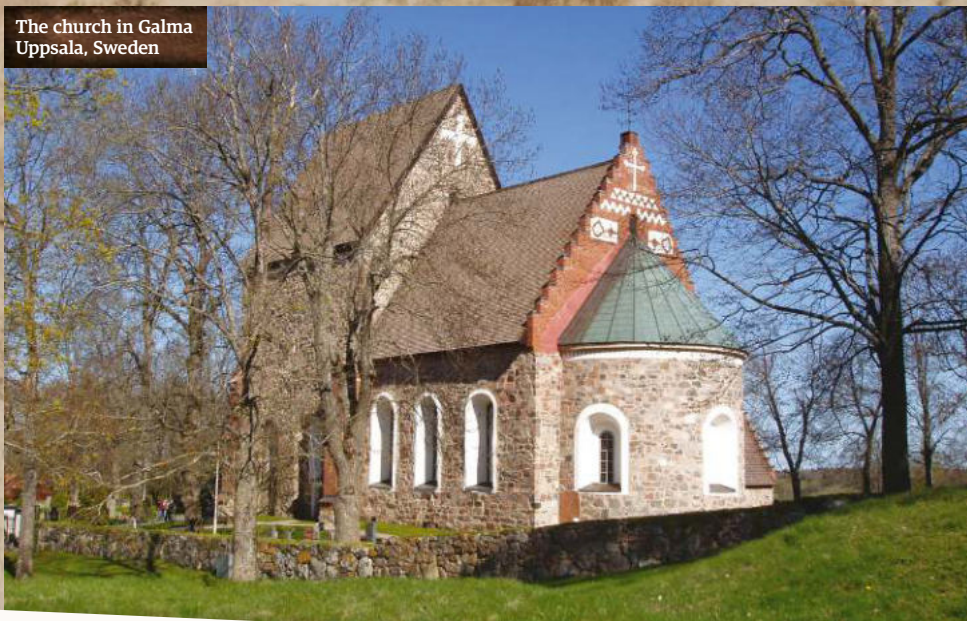
Thor's hammer also played an important role in formal ceremonies and consecration, effectively providing protection and order in the community. Interestingly, although Thor famously wielded Mjölñir, war hammers were not used in combat until the late Medieval period, post-Viking Age.

Mjölñir was made by dwarven brothers Eitri and Brokkr





The church in Galma  
Uppsala, Sweden



*Thor's Fight with the Giants*  
by Mårten Eskil Winge in 1872



## MEET THE SKALD

Much of what we know about Thor was recorded by the Icelandic poet Snorri Sturluson

Born in Iceland in 1179, Snorri Sturluson was raised by Jon Loftsson, a relative of the Norwegian royal family. His education probably included the work of Sæmundr 'the Learned' Sigfusson, Loftsson's grandfather and the author (or, some scholars say, simply the compiler) of the *Poetic Edda* (or *Older Edda*), a collection of retold myths.

Snorri was wealthy and became renowned as a poet and lawyer. In 1215, he was elected to the position of Lawspeaker of the Althing, Iceland's highest office, but became embroiled in a plot to bring Iceland under Norwegian rule and was assassinated.

Snorri is best known today for the *Prose Edda* (or *Younger Edda*), which, together with the *Poetic Edda*, makes up our main source for Norse mythology. He also composed the *Heimskringla*, a history of the kings of Norway from the 9th century to 1177.

As a poet, Snorri would have encountered legends and historical tales, many existing only in oral form. Having studied the *Poetic Edda* as a boy, he may have decided to preserve these tales and match the work of the famous Sæmundr. The gods in the *Prose Edda* act more like superheroes; it is not known whether Snorri rewrote the stories for Christian readers or whether they had already been sanitised by two centuries of oral transmission in a Christian country.

Snorri Sturluson, author  
of the *Prose Edda*





## THOR'S ENDURING FRANCHISE

In Norse mythology, Ragnarök is a prophesised battle that will see the gods assemble to face off against their greatest enemies and (spoiler alert) they will lose. Odin will be swallowed whole by the enormous wolf Fenrir; the fire giant Sutr will defeat Freyr; Heimdallr and Loki will kill each other; and mighty Thor – though he will beat the Midgard Serpent first – will collapse dead.

While the gods fight, the earth will quake before submerging under the water, the sun will blacken and the heavens will burn. Ragnarök is essentially the Viking equivalent of the biblical apocalypse, but where the Christian end of the world is final, Ragnarök is cyclical.

The prophecy ends with the promise that the world will resurface, renewed and fertile. Two

## "THE LEGEND OF THOR HAS ALSO BEEN REVIVED AND RETOLD DOWN THE YEARS"

humans will repopulate the Earth and the gods will return. In comic book terms, Ragnarök is more like the elaborate crossover events that Marvel and DC run before they want to revamp their characters.

It's fitting, then, that while Thor is not the supreme deity he once was, he lives on. His name is given to the fourth day of the week, in place names like Thundersley, Thundridge and Thursley, the chemical element thorium, and in personal names like Thorolf, Torstan and Torvald, which are still used today.

Beyond the Australian actor fighting aliens on the silver screen, the legend of Thor has also been revived and retold down the years.

As well as the Christian Snorri Sturluson erasing the religious aspect from Thor's sagas, the Old English work *Solomon ad Saturn* goes further, even recruiting him to the side of Christianity.

In its pages, Thor – under his Anglo-Saxon name of Thunor – strikes the Devil with a fiery

axe, much as he slew giants with his hammer. Thor and the rest of the Norse sagas have also been reinvented by literary greats including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Rudyard Kipling, JRR Tolkien and Neil Gaiman.

Beyond literature, Swiss painter Henry Fuseli reimagines the deity by putting oils on canvas for his Neoclassical nude *Thor Battering the Midgard Serpent* from 1790. The Swedish historical painter Mårten Eskil Winge took a more literal approach in *Thor's Fight with the Giants* in 1872, in which the thunder god rides on a chariot pulled by goats. He also appears in 19th-century composer Richard Wagner's epic *Ring Cycle*.

Of course, in 1962, Thor was resurrected once more by comic book writer Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby. But while Marvel keeps on churning out pages and making blockbuster movies, it seems that the thunder god has a bigger franchise than any of the other Avengers and will outlast them all.

A bronze Viking Thor's-hammer amulet from 10th-century Iceland



Chris Hemsworth portrays Stan Lee's version of Thor on the silver screen. This incarnation is based on the christianised depiction of Thor as a superhero



### Keepsakes

Thor holds his hammer, Mjölner, in this 6.7cm-high statuette





# Time Traveller's Handbook

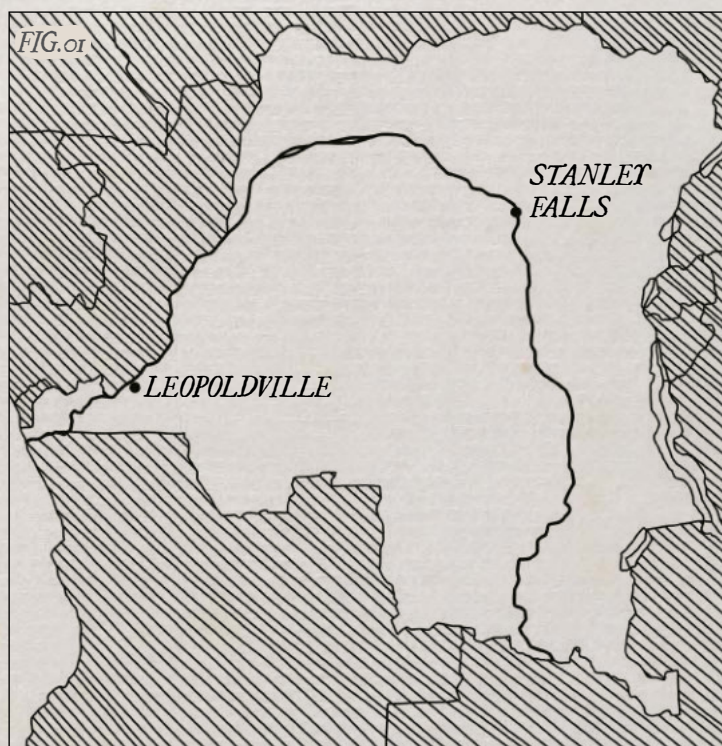
## THE CONGO FREE STATE

*Africa, 1895*

**K**ing Leopold II of Belgium persuaded the rest of Europe to give him a huge swathe of the verdant Congo Basin when they were carving up Africa into colonies. Though christened the Congo Free State in 1885, the country serves as Leopold's personal slave plantation.

Capitalising on the high demand for rubber, which is used in everything from bicycles

tyres to telegraph wire insulation, Congolese workers are sent into the dense jungle to slash vines and collect it. They must meet unrealistically high quotas and those who fail are flogged, and their wives and children kidnapped, raped or mutilated by the brutal Force Publique. They are a military police force made up of African conscripts commanded by Belgian officers. Millions of Congolese are dying from disease, starvation and summary executions while



### WHERE TO STAY

The Congo Free State is privately owned by King Leopold II rather than a colony of the Belgian government, so forget about making a clearing in the rainforest and building yourself a house there – the king has declared that any land that doesn't already contain a native village belongs to him. The villages are dangerous, too, since the Force Publique are liable to show up at any time for a punitive raid on the Congolese. The safest place is probably Leopoldville, a commercial hub on the Congo River that also has a railway leading to the seaport of Matadi.



### Dos & don'ts



#### Check your vaccinations.

Smallpox, sleeping sickness and swine flu are all pandemic in the Congo right now. Sleeping sickness alone kills approximately half a million people a year!



#### Bring food.

Most Congolese are starving because they don't have enough time to grow food while collecting rubber. You won't be able to depend on their hospitality.



#### Bring your own map.

Much of the Congo is still uncharted. Without a modern topographical map, you will quickly get lost if you go exploring on your own.



#### Beware of cannibals.

Many of the tribes in the Congo Basin still practise cannibalism, so before you accept a dinner invitation, make sure you aren't on the menu.



#### Borrow a gun.

The Force Publique are required to account for every shot fired by presenting the severed hand of their victim, so don't waste bullets hunting.



#### Invest in rubber.

Although trade is booming now, it will collapse in a few years due to over-harvesting and the deliberate destruction of rubber vines by the natives filling their quotas.



#### Keep a journal.

Some remote tribes have not been written before. When the British explorer Henry Stanley was mapping the Congo in the 1870s, they thought he was practising witchcraft.



#### Carry a whip.

The 'chicote' hippopotamus hide whip is used by the Force Publique to punish villagers for the slightest misdemeanour and is seen as a symbol of their brutality.



## WHO TO BEFRIEND

### William Henry Sheppard

Sheppard is an African-American Presbyterian missionary that the Congolese have nicknamed 'Mundele N'dom', which means 'black white man' or 'black man in clothes', for his Western ways. However, Sheppard has adapted well to jungle life, learning the customs and languages of the Kuba tribe and exploring regions of the Congo that no other foreigner has ever seen. He is also carefully documenting the atrocities against the Congolese and his testimony, which will form part of a report published in *The New York Times* and other American newspapers, will eventually help rescue the Congo Free State from Leopold's grip (though not the Belgians').

**Extra tip:** When villagers can't meet their rubber quota, the soldiers are expected to carry out executions and bring back the right hand of the victims as proof. This has turned hands into a grim currency. Desperate workers will sometimes raid neighbouring villages and cut off hands to give to the soldiers instead of rubber.



FIG.03

## WHO TO AVOID

### Léon Rom

A Belgian administrator at Stanley Falls, Captain Rom is in charge of the local Force Publique. Infamous for his ruthless governance, a contemporary English newspaper reported that he always kept the gallows set up outside the police station and even decorated his garden flowerbeds with the heads of villagers who had attacked the police. Whether it was based on this report, or if the two men met when Joseph Conrad worked on a Congo River steamship, it's been claimed Rom was the inspiration for the villainous Kurtz in Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*.

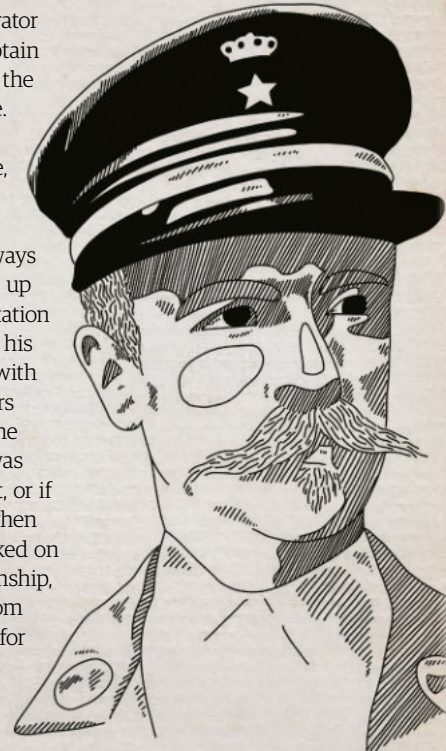


FIG.04

## Helpful skills

As well as the African jungle, you'll have to contend with the locals and their colonial overlords



FIG.05

### Botany

Much of the Congo is still jungle, so recognising which plants are useful is vital. There are also two very similar-looking tree vines in the Congo but only one of them produces rubber latex – make sure to pick the right one!



FIG.07

### French

Belgium has three official languages – French, Dutch and German – but French is the language of colonial administration in the Congo Free State. It's the only Western language that any locals can speak.

### Sailing

The Congo River and its many tributaries are the best way to get around in the region. Knowing how to handle the small river steamers will be a big advantage.



FIG.06





BURKE & HARE

THE BODY  
SNATCHERS

FEAT. DR KNOX



# BURKE & HARE

## The Body Snatchers

In Regency Edinburgh, Burke and Hare took the crime of body-snatching to its ultimate extreme – and in doing so, guaranteed their lasting infamy

Written by Nell Darby

When news of a string of grizzly murders reached the Edinburgh press, they appeared to talk about one of the perpetrators in glowing terms – the “neat little man”, around 1.65 metres in height, looked like a dancing master, and in fact was very good at performing the Irish jig. He was a pleasant drinking companion; relatively intelligent, and an “expert with the spade”. But when he was described as having a “laughing devil in his eye”, it became clear that the portrait was satirical.

The Irish jig could be a reference not only to the man’s ethnic origin, but also to the dance that was said to be performed involuntarily by a man who was at the end of a hangman’s noose. Furthermore, expertise with a spade might be useful to one who killed or disposed of bodies.

The description, in fact, was of one Mr Burke, and the same article also described his friend as looking like a reptile or an idiot, with his “dull, dead, blackish eyes” and a sullenness “not born of the jail, but native to the almost deformed face of the leering miscreant.”

The friend’s name was one Mr Hare, and together William Burke and William Hare have become synonymous with the ghoulish spate of body-snatching that terrified British society in the early 19th century.

Body snatchers, also known as resurrectionists, were seedy individuals who looked to supply the growing demand for cadavers by digging up the deceased to sell on to eager medical students for study. Burke and Hare, instead of exhuming corpses, chose to murder their victims to make money – although *Blackwood’s Magazine* depicts Hare as looking not so much “like a murderer as a resurrectionist – a brute that will group in the grave for the dead rather than stifle the living.”

Both men came from humble origins. Burke was an Ulsterman, the son of a labourer, born in 1792 in Urney, County Tyrone. He struggled to make a living – working at various times as a servant, baker, weaver and cobbler – and maintain his family. Eventually, after a spell in the Donegal Militia, he left them behind and, around 1818, moved to Scotland, where he promised to send money home and lift them out of poverty.

Instead, he found both a mistress, Helen McDougal, and a job as a navvy on the Union Canal, and soon forgot about his Irish wife and children. He also met another Irish navvy – Armagh-native William Hare, a former farm labourer and servant who was known for his incredibly bad temper. Hare and his wife, Margaret, ran a boarding house in Edinburgh – and Burke and McDougal needed cheap accommodation. The two couples were soon living

A caricature of the killers getting women drunk with Death’s help





# Burke & Hare: The Body Snatchers

## Anatomy of the resurrectionists' rise

Burke and Hare were far from the only body snatchers in Scotland. There are references to it dating back to the 17th century, with acts committed by local medical students or even by doctors, keen for a corpse or two to practice their skills on. From Edinburgh to Kelso, Berwick to Perth, cases came before the courts or were dealt with in local communities and they caused a feeling of revulsion among the wider God-fearing population. This was reflected south of the border, where both London and its provinces also witnessed similar offences.

Body snatchers were also known as 'resurrectionists' or 'resurrection men', but they weren't trying to resurrect the dead; they wanted to sell them to medical schools, who were faced with a shortage of cadavers to learn their skills on. This deficit was due to the fact that prior to 1832, the only bodies that could be used for anatomical research and training were those of convicted prisoners who had been sentenced to death and dissection at their trials. These felons were those guilty of the worst crimes and because fewer people committed such offences, there weren't that many corpses as a result.

In addition, the 19th century saw fewer people sentenced to death than in the 18th, while the number of medical schools in the UK was increasing (partly because private schools did not need a licence to operate). This put pressure on students and teachers to get sufficient corpses. Body-snatching was a crime worth participating in, for it was not classed as a felony – a serious offence – but a misdemeanour, meaning that if individuals were caught, they only faced a few months in prison rather than a hanging.

However, the continued public revulsion over body-snatching eventually led to the passing of the Anatomy Act in 1832, which licensed doctors and scientists to practise anatomy and stated that anyone who had 'lawful possession' of a dead body could allow it to be used for dissection if no relatives of the deceased objected.

Caricaturist Thomas Rowlandson's illustration of resurrection men depicted them as evil ghouls



together with the men becoming close friends both at work and home.

Burke and McDougal were not the only ones paying for lodging with the Hares. Another was Donald Bark, a former soldier, who died of natural causes one night in December 1827, having failed to pay his rent. Hare now needed money and to get rid of this unwanted, unclaimed body. He had heard that the medical doctors and students in Edinburgh always needed bodies to dissect, and an idea soon formed.

He and Burke took Bark's body in a sack to anatomist Dr Robert Knox on Surgeon's Square, where one of his assistants eagerly paid £7 10s for the corpse. The two men split the money, Hare taking £4 5s and Hare a pound less. This was a lucrative business, for Bark had only owed £4 in rent. But how could they make a regular living out of selling dead bodies?

The answer was soon presented to them. Abigail Simpson was a poor woman from a village just outside Edinburgh. She had come into the city one day in December to get her weekly pension of 1s 6d. She had duly spent part of it on drink and had the misfortune to bump into Hare while clearly drunk. She was also old, weak and lonely, and welcomed the chance to start a conversation with the amenable Hare.

He persuaded her to come to his house to have a dram of whisky, which turned into several. Abigail began crooning old songs and became so drunk that she was invited to stay for the night. The following morning, ill and vomiting from the drink, Burke and Hare decided to take action. Burke lay on the woman's body to stop her moving while Hare put his hands over her nose and mouth, soon stifling her. Her body was stripped, placed in a box and duly sold to Dr Knox.

Burke and Hare had now moved from selling bodies to killing them first. They were full-blown murderers and had the taste for it. Another unfortunate tenant, an old man known to posterity as Joseph, had become ill, although inconveniently for the Irishmen, he lingered on. They therefore helped him on his way, smothering him with a pillow – their favoured method of killing as it left few violent marks for anatomists

to spot and they would be more likely to believe that their medical subjects had died a natural death.

A further body – this one of a 40-year-old Cheshire man, a match-seller who had been lodging at Hare's house when Abigail Simpson was killed, but had been prostrate with severe jaundice – was soon after sold to Dr Knox for £10. There is some doubt over the order in which these unfortunate people were killed; much of what we know is taken from Burke's own confession, but his confusion over dates suggest that there were so many victims in the end that he couldn't remember exactly who had been killed and when.

The bodies started to pile up. They included a woman named Mary Paterson, who was persuaded to drink heavily until she lost consciousness and whose body was presented to Dr Knox so quickly that he began to harbour doubts about how Burke and Hare were obtaining these corpses, although he still paid them. In fact, Mary was especially lucrative for them – it was said that her long hair was cut off to sell on to a hairdresser, for use on his unwitting customers.

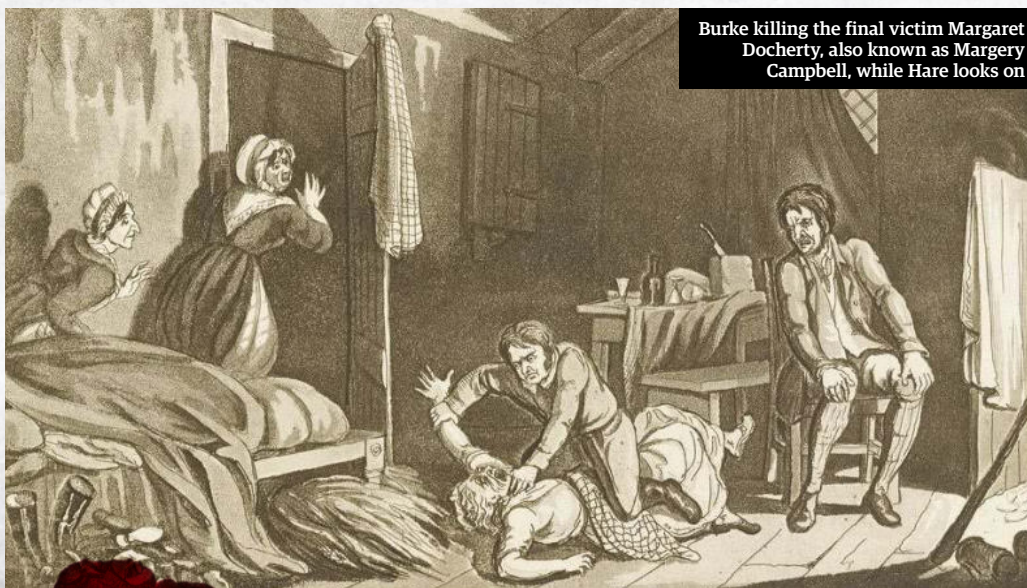
Burke stated that Mary's body had been bought from her friends; one of Knox's assistants responded that it was "rather a new thing for me to hear of the relatives selling the bodies of their



Burke shouldered all the blame for the pairs murders



Hare managed to escape justice by blaming Burke



Burke killing the final victim Margaret Docherty, also known as Margery Campbell, while Hare looks on



Dr Knox, recipient of Burke and Hare's corpses



## “Burke and Hare decided to take action”

friends.” Burke told him that if he didn’t stop ‘catechising’ him, he would stop bringing bodies. But, of course, he continued.

Another victim was Mrs Ostler, a blonde, short woman about 40 years old, who worked as a washerwoman. She was visiting the house of Burke’s cousin, John Broggan, where the three men got her blind drunk. John’s wife went out to buy a tea chest – and Mrs Ostler next left the house in that tea chest, as the pair carried it to Surgeon’s Square and returned with cash.

The pair would commonly call into Dr Knox’s rooms in the late afternoon or evening, telling one of his assistants that they “had a subject for the doctor.” Around 90 minutes later, Dr Knox would

## Burke & Hare: The Body Snatchers.

### Would you have been on Burke and Hare’s kill list?

Burke and Hare had a tried-and-trusted method of finding and killing their victims, in their quest to make cash from selling bodies to anatomists. If you were in Edinburgh in the late 1820s, would you have been at risk of dying at their hands? Read on to find out.

*Are you a tenant in Hare’s Edinburgh boarding house?*

Yes: You are at a high risk of being killed – be vigilant!

No: You are still at risk, even if you’re just visiting the house.

*Are you elderly, poor or lacking family and unlikely to be missed immediately?*

Yes: You will be targeted by Burke and Hare, as they will think nobody would try to claim your body.

No: You are a greater risk to Burke and Hare, but you’re not out of the woods!

*Are you feeling ill and unable to pay your way as a boarder?*

Yes: If you owe Hare money, and you’re poorly and frail, you might find that death comes for you quicker than expected...

No: Once Burke and Hare have got a taste for murder, you might find that you die anyway.

*Have you been asked to do some laundry work for Mrs Hare?*

Yes: Be careful, as this may be a pretext to get you into the house and killed.

No: Be wary of other pretexts they may use to get you into the lodging house – nobody is safe!

*Do you like having a sociable drink with others?*

Yes: Good – this means your reactions will be slower and you’ll put up less of a resistance when Burke and Hare try to smother you.

No: They’ll still try to smother you even if you’re relatively sober, as they did with Daft Jamie and Mary Docherty.

*Are you weakened by ill health or physical deformity?*

Yes: You’ll be Burke and Hare’s preferred victim – too weak to fight back when they attack you, one man will sit on your chest while the other puts his hand over your mouth and nose.

No: There may be more of a struggle but they will still attempt to kill you.

### How did you score?

YES = 20 points NO = 10 points

100-70 points

You’d best get your affairs in order as you’ll probably find yourself in Dr Knox’s rooms soon.

60-40 points

You’ve managed to make a lucky escape this time, but it might be time to get out of the city!

30-0 points

You’re alive! Congratulations – you’re luckier than the 16 people who died.



# Burke & Hare: The Body Snatchers

tell one assistant, Mr Paterson, to be "in the way with the keys, as it would not do to keep the parties waiting."

Burke and Hare's victims were commonly poor men and women, those who might not be missed by family and friends, and those who would welcome the chance to drink with the two men and their partners in the house in Tanner's Close.

However, they got complacent, and it was with their last male 'subject' that Burke and Hare made a fatal mistake. They picked someone they thought would not be missed – a local homeless man, both physically and mentally disabled. But unfortunately for them, the man's disabilities and unfortunate status that led to him begging and performing in the streets for money also meant that he was well known to Edinburgh's natives.

James Wilson was just 18 years old and known to locals as 'Daft Jamie'. Burke and Hare underestimated how much his absence would be noticed and just how strong the young man was. Their usual method was to get their subjects drunk before smothering them but Daft Jamie didn't want to drink much. Then, when the two men tried to kill him, he struggled valiantly for his life, causing them more effort than usual to subdue him.

But subdue him they did, and duly brought his corpse to Dr Knox's team in a large chest, being paid their usual fee. However, when the body was re-examined the next morning by Knox's assistants, one commented, "That looks very like Daft Jamie!" The others present all agreed, and then wondered how the body had been obtained – had Jamie's friends sold his body onto Burke and Hare?

Soon, however, a report that Jamie had gone missing reached Surgeon's Square. The dissection of the body went ahead as planned, but questions were being raised about how a young and physically healthy man had suddenly died and been brought along to be cut up by two men who were not previously known to him.

The first body to have been sold to the anatomists by Burke and Hare had been one of Hare's tenants. At the end, it was two more of his tenants who put an end to the men's grim career. They had been smothering their 16th and final victim, Margaret Docherty (also known as Mary Mitchell and Margery Campbell), in their house, but despite being a middle-aged woman, she put up such a struggle against the two strong men that the noise was heard by tenants James and Ann Grey.

Ann, in fact, claimed she had heard a woman's voice shouting "Murder!" but because she was used to the lack of peace at Hare's house, she and her husband had simply gone elsewhere for the

night for a bit of quiet sleep, rather than enquire as to what was going on.

When they returned the next morning, they noted that Mrs Hare was behaving oddly, telling them not to go near the bed in one of the rooms. When she went out, the intrigued Mr and Mrs Grey went to have a look and when they found Docherty's body, they immediately ran to the police. In the meantime, the corpse was quickly removed and it was later found by police in Dr Knox's dissection room.

Bizarrely, Knox was never called to give evidence at the pair's trial and he escaped prosecution altogether. There was little direct evidence to tie him to the murders, although many wondered how such a prominent medical expert did not suspect where this seemingly endless supply of fresh corpses came from.

The population of Edinburgh was outraged by this miscarriage of justice and an angry mob attacked his house and burned effigies of Knox in the streets. Although he never faced criminal charges, he was slowly forced out of the Scottish academic scene and eventually moved to London, his reputation in tatters.

Despite Hare's clear involvement in the murders, he too never faced justice. Instead, he was allowed to turn king's evidence, making clear Burke's role in the crimes. His wife, in turn, was judged to have known about the murders, and to have been involved, but to have acted under duress because of her husband's temper. Burke was made the sole scapegoat for his and Hare's many offences, and at

Christmas in 1828, he was tried and found guilty of murder. He was sentenced to be hanged and then, appropriately, to be dissected himself.

In early January 1829, Burke made a confession to the sheriff – but soon after admitted that his comments had been made in order to implicate Hare in several crimes rather than to admit his own guilt. However, he was perceived to be 'penitent' while in prison and resigned to his fate. He was tolerated so much by the authorities that the diet of bread and water he had been ordered to have when he was sentenced wasn't adhered to, and instead he was allowed "some indulgence".

Some visitors couldn't quite believe he could be guilty of the horrible crimes he had been accused



Daft Jamie

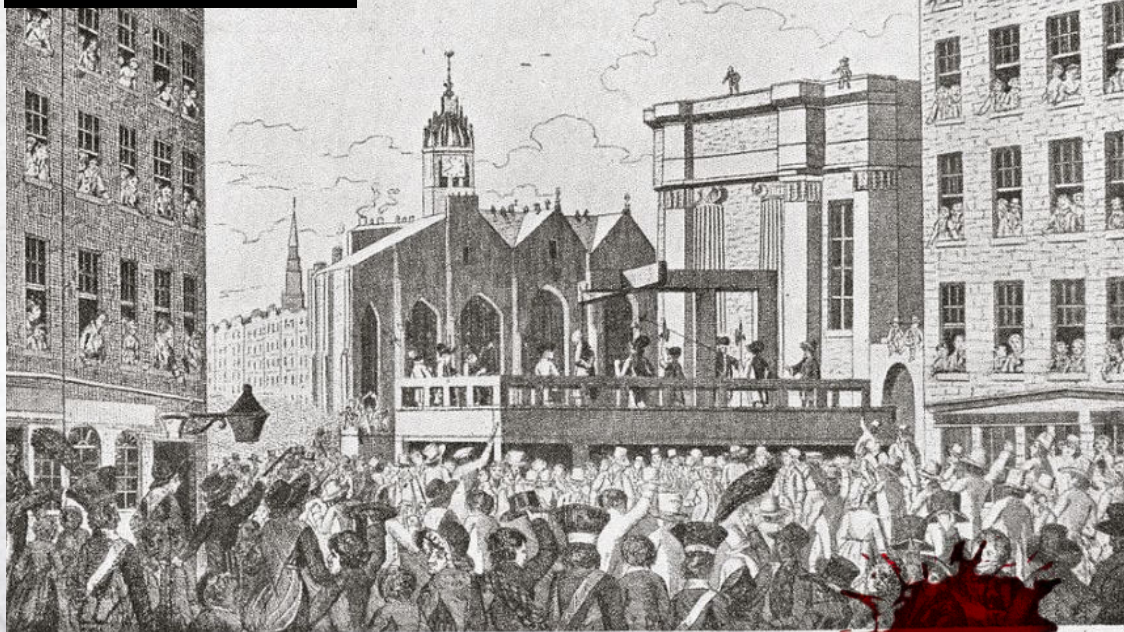


Margaret Docherty



Facial reconstruction of William Burke created using measurements from his dissection and death mask

Burke's execution on Edinburgh's Lawnmarket was witnessed by crowds estimated to be in the thousands





# Burke & Hare: The Body Snatchers

of. They said for his face "has an agreeable, often a pleasant expression" at odds with his reputation. Regardless of this, though, he was sent to the gallows on 28 January 1829 and his lifeless remains sent to Edinburgh University. Tickets were sold for his dissection, making it a rather gory form of theatre for the city's population.

Burke was dead and Hare as good as dead, as he had to hide out of sight of those who hated him, yet they both lived on – and still do – in the public's imagination. Those attending trials would cry out, "Burke him! Hare him!" in regard to the accused. Other body snatchers, including John Bishop, who claimed to have obtained and sold between 500 and 1,000 bodies over a 12-year

'career' ending in 1831, became known as 'the London Burkers'.

Those who, as children, had lived through the ghoulish events, as old people recited to their grandchildren the rhyme they had used when they played: "Up the close and down the stair, in the house with Burke and Hare. Burke's the butcher, Hare's the thief, Knox the man who buys the beef."

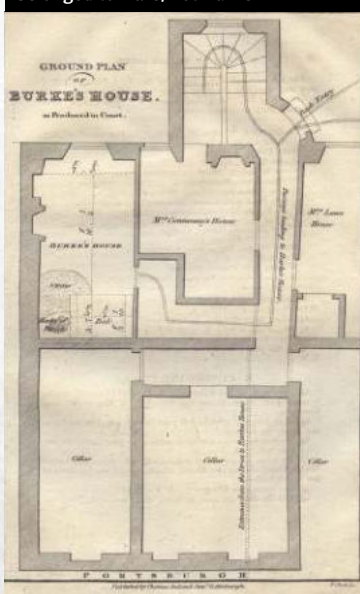
Today, the death mask of William Burke is on display in Edinburgh at the William Burke Museum, together with a book said to have been made from skin taken from his dead body after he was hanged. It seems rather appropriate an end for one of the men who made a living from other people's bodies.

**"However, they got complacent, and it was with their last male 'subject' that Burke and Hare made a fatal mistake"**

A piece of Burke's brain in a specimen jar



A plan of the doss house where many of the murders took place, though it belonged to Hare, not Burke



An 1887 illustration of body snatchers raiding a cemetery to find a body to sell by Hablot Knight Browne



## Invasion of the body snatchers

It wasn't just Burke and Hare – Scotland experienced a crime wave of people stealing bodies throughout the early 1800s

**1808**

The body of Janet Spark, an old woman, is snatched from a churchyard in Aberdeenshire. It is found two months later, reburied in sand.

**December 1813**

The body of Janet McAllister is stolen from a Glasgow churchyard. Robert Monro, John McLean and Andrew Russel are later found not guilty.

**1817**

Three Aberdeen apprentices, James Taylor, John Gordon and George Pirie, plead guilty to stealing John Bremner's body and pay compensation to his relatives.

**c.1817**

Robert Liston, later a well known surgeon, works with a bodysnatcher to steal bodies from Fife, including the bodies of a sailor and a female.

**1820**

A Dr Lowry is convicted of stealing the body of a grey-haired woman in Coldingham, Berwickshire, and sentenced to six months in prison.

**1821**

Thomas Hodge and Andrew Miller are convicted of stealing two bodies from Lanark Churchyard and given six months in prison.

**1823**

A man called Thomas Hodge is banished for seven years after being tried and found guilty of stealing dead bodies from Larbert Churchyard in Stirlingshire, Scotland.

**1827**

The body of a 19-year-old woman is found in a trunk in Newcastle, after suspicions about the smell coming from it.

**February 1828**

Henry Gillis is detained after being found with corpses of a poor woman and a child, Robina McNeill, in Anderston, Glasgow.

**September 1829**

A man named Bell is taken into custody after two dead bodies are recovered. They had been stolen from the Gorbals burying ground by the river in Glasgow.



# Through History KITCHEN UTENSILS

From the Dutch oven to the microwave oven, the evolution of the objects in our kitchens is integral to our culinary heritage



Written by Emma Kay

Emma is author of *Vintage Kitchenalia*, a history of British culinary history from the 16th to the 20th century. It also includes beautiful illustrations and historic recipes and is available now for £15 from Amberley Publishing.

Ralph Collier

AMERICAN 1807-88

The race to patent the rotary mixer was close during the 19th century. Ralph Collier in 1856 just pipped British inventor EP Griffiths to the post, whose patent for the same technology was published one year later. Collier's was based on "vertically revolving stirring blades made of metallic wire... attached to a central shaft."

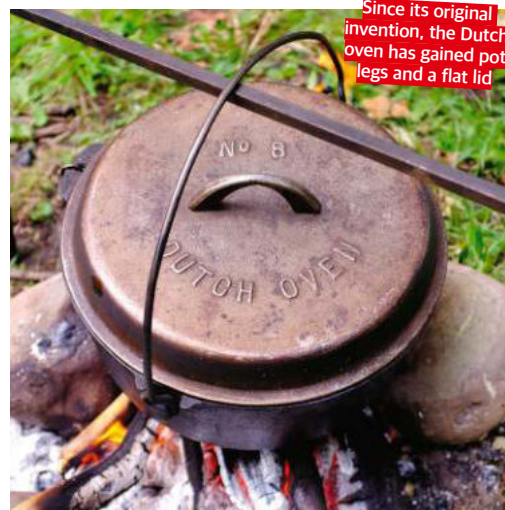
The most modern invention of the fork was patented in 1970 as the 'spork' — part fork, part spoon — for the fast food industry

## TABLE FORK 11TH-12TH CENTURY

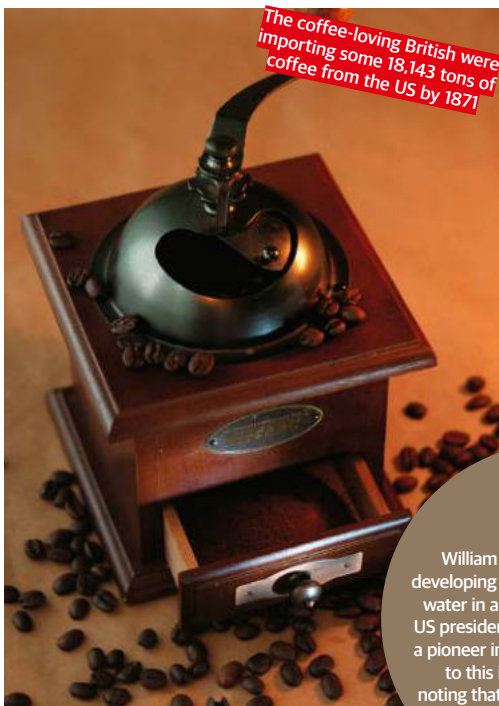
While forks have been in use since ancient times, they were not considered to be tools for eating until around the 11th century. Allegedly, a visiting noblewoman attending a dinner for a number of dignitaries in the Republic of Venice produced a two-pronged fork during the meal. Horrified members of the clergy in attendance gasped at the harrowing thought that anything less worthy than the fingers given to us by God himself should be used to put food in our mouths. English traveller Thomas Coryat introduced the first table forks to his home country in the early 1600s, despite the clever 'sucket fork' of the 1500s, which combined both spoon and fork to tackle delicate sweetmeats.

## DUTCH OVEN 1707

Inspired by methods already being used to cast iron pots in the Netherlands, Abraham Darby patented the first 'Dutch oven' during the early 1700s. This was a one-pot wonder with a hooped handle to balance it over the fire and a tight-fitting lid. These robust cast-iron cooking vessels were sold to the early American colonists. They proved invaluable for their ability to boil, stew and roast a variety of victuals, which was needed in the harsh terrains of those unchartered lands.



Since its original invention, the Dutch oven has gained pot legs and a flat lid



The coffee-loving British were importing some 18,143 tons of coffee from the US by 1871

## CANNING EARLY 1800S

In 1810, Peter Durand acquired a patent to develop sealable tin containers, a process that French confectioner Nicolas Appert had been working on for some years. His 1811 book *The Art of Preserving* is testament to this. The patent was sold onto Bryan Donkin and John Hall, who opened the first canning factory in England. Durand referred to the source of his patent as a "friend abroad"

— perhaps this was Appert? We will probably never know. Appert himself founded one of the first commercial preserving factories in the world, La Maison Appert, which was destroyed during conflict in 1814. He died in poverty.

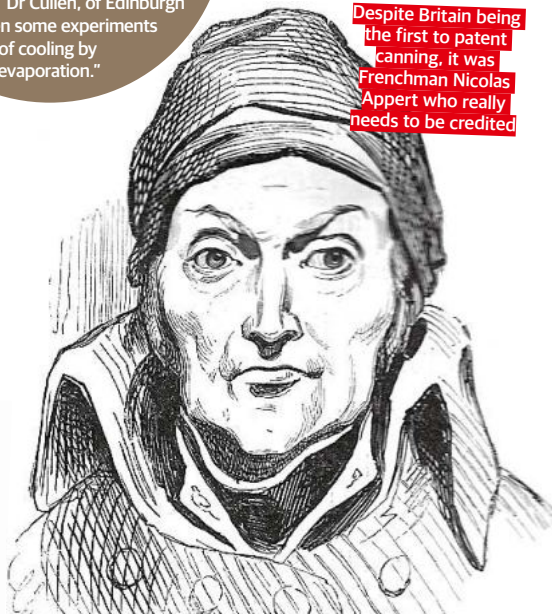
William Cullen

SCOTTISH 1710-90

William Cullen is credited with developing a machine for evaporating water in a vacuum as early as 1755. US president Benjamin Franklin, (also a pioneer inventor), makes reference to this in his personal diaries, noting that "Dr Cullen, of Edinburgh has given some experiments of cooling by evaporation."

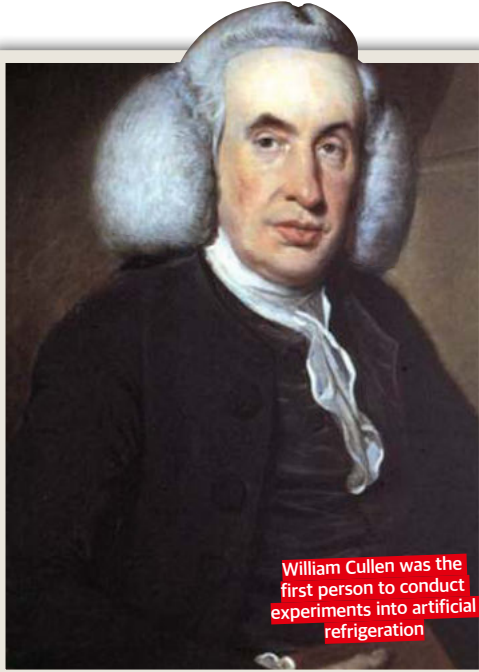
## COFFEE MILL MID-1700S

Coffee consumption, and all the paraphernalia required to process and drink it, became widely popular during the 17th century. It is thought that Nicholas Brook invented the first coffee mill around 1657. This must have been a tremendously luxurious gadget that would have been purchased exclusively from the Frying Pan in Tooley Street, London, for £2 — around £200 today. Lancashire and Wolverhampton became the largest areas of coffee mill manufacturing. By the early 1800s, one Lancashire firm was producing 90,000 domestic coffee mills a year.



Despite Britain being the first to patent canning, it was Frenchman Nicolas Appert who really needs to be credited





William Cullen was the first person to conduct experiments into artificial refrigeration

## REFRIGERATOR 1856

Outdoor ice houses and snow stacks were once the main resources for ice. The word 'refrigerator' was in common use from the 1850s, and one of the first inventors of modern refrigeration was George Bevan Sloper, who gained his patent in 1856. Wealthy Britons had access to electric domestic refrigerators by the 1920s.

### Gustaf Dalén

SWEDISH 1869-1937

Gustaf Dalén invented the first storage-heated oven in 1922 – the AGA. He won the Nobel Prize for his work with hydrocarbons and dispensing light and his cast-iron cooker was capable of cooking simultaneously via two hot plates and two ovens. Most surprising of all is that this great physicist had been blind since 1912.



The Hobart Corporation, which founded the KitchenAid stand mixer, are now owned by the multinational manufacturer Whirlpool Corporation

## THE CLOSED RANGE 1796

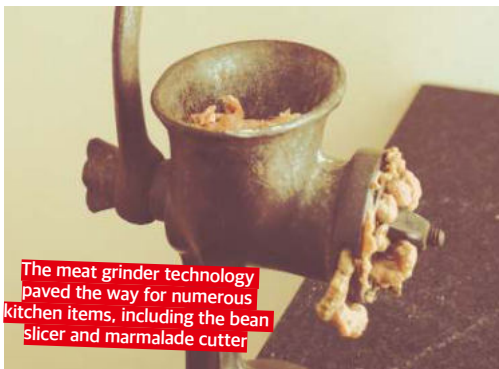
Sir Benjamin Thompson, also known as Count Rumford, is the person most associated with the progressive invention of the early fireplace for the benefit of cooking and heating. He did this by simply altering the amount of air that circulated up a chimney and his 'roaster' was a self-contained unit that sat flush with the front of the range brickwork. It was heated through flues and was an early precursor to the closed 'kitcheners' of the mid to late 19th century. His prototype kitchen design was installed in the Foundling Hospital in Bloomsbury, London, as early as 1796.



Count Rumford was a hugely innovative and talented inventor and physicist. An Anglo-American, he jointly founded the Royal Institution in 1799

## FOOD MIXER 1919

In her book *Post-War Kitchen*, Marguerite Patten, the culinary dame of the 20th century, reminisces about the time she demonstrated the new-fangled electric mixers and liquidisers of the 1950s at Harrods in London. It was the American firm Hobart's that released their revolutionary early model of the commercial KitchenAid in 1919, although numerous inventors had developed the technology for creating a mixer with rotating parts in the past. It would be another 30-odd years before the electronic engineer Kenneth Wood was able to rival the American market with his legendary Kenwood Chef in 1948.



The meat grinder technology paved the way for numerous kitchen items, including the bean slicer and marmalade cutter

## SPRING-BALANCE SCALES 1770

Counter-balance scales with a tin pan on one side and cast-iron weights of varying sizes the other are probably most synonymous with Victorian weighing systems in both the kitchen and retail establishments. The spring-balance scales that we are more familiar with today were invented in the West Midlands in 1770 by Richard Salter but his product was not patented until 1838. This may have been due to early teething problems, as a critic of the time confirmed, observing Salter's scales as "liable to vary with the temperature, and also to become relaxed by constant use."

Spring-balance scales from 1914. Leonardo da Vinci drew designs for the first self-indicating scales in the 1500s



Microwave ovens operate by heating the water molecules in food, cooking it from the inside out

## MICROWAVE OVEN 1945

There is still some contention over the invention of the microwave, which was finally patented by Raytheon in 1945. Credit is always given to inventor Percy Spencer, whose story involves standing in front of a radar set one day and observing his chocolate bar melting. It was from this that he began to investigate the possibility of cooking with microwaves. On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean some years earlier, James Lovelock had connected the output of a magnetron to a metal chamber containing a potato. It worked along the same principle as a microwave oven and cooked the potato in ten minutes.

## MEAT GRINDER

### EARLY 1800S

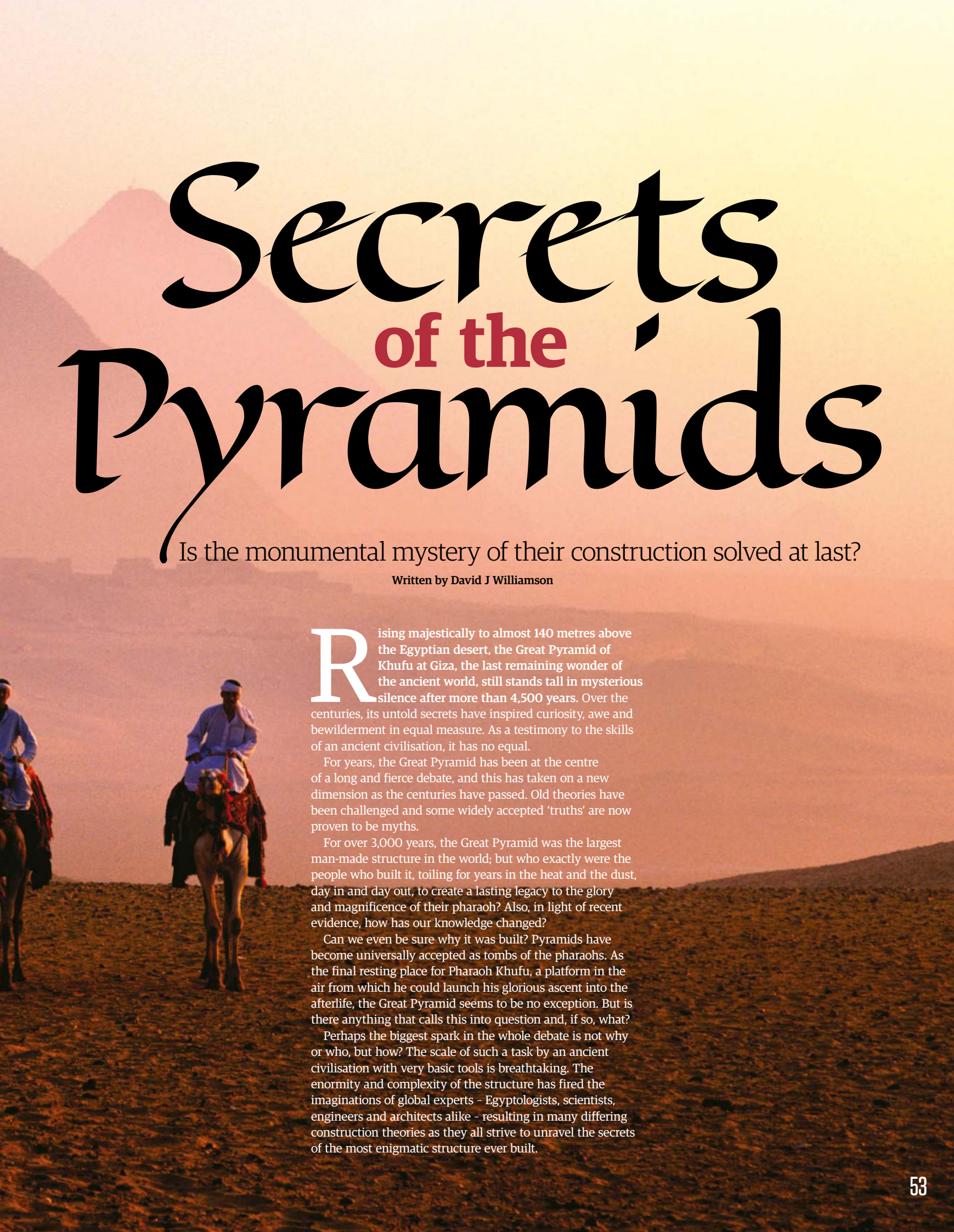
Karl Drais invented the first meat grinder in the early 1800s. It was a hand-cranked device where meat was forced into a metal plate and then squeezed through a series of holes, exuding long strands of meat. But this device would only become iconic due to James Osborn Spong, a young entrepreneur originally from Northampton who established the firm of Spong & Co, specialising in grinding, slicing and chopping devices. Spong & Co became the most successful of these manufacturers during the 19th century, recording sales of 200,000 mincers by 1882.





*“The enormity and complexity of the structure has fired the imaginations of global experts”*





# Secrets of the Pyramids

Is the monumental mystery of their construction solved at last?

Written by David J Williamson

Rising majestically to almost 140 metres above the Egyptian desert, the Great Pyramid of Khufu at Giza, the last remaining wonder of the ancient world, still stands tall in mysterious silence after more than 4,500 years. Over the centuries, its untold secrets have inspired curiosity, awe and bewilderment in equal measure. As a testimony to the skills of an ancient civilisation, it has no equal.

For years, the Great Pyramid has been at the centre of a long and fierce debate, and this has taken on a new dimension as the centuries have passed. Old theories have been challenged and some widely accepted 'truths' are now proven to be myths.

For over 3,000 years, the Great Pyramid was the largest man-made structure in the world; but who exactly were the people who built it, toiling for years in the heat and the dust, day in and day out, to create a lasting legacy to the glory and magnificence of their pharaoh? Also, in light of recent evidence, how has our knowledge changed?

Can we even be sure why it was built? Pyramids have become universally accepted as tombs of the pharaohs. As the final resting place for Pharaoh Khufu, a platform in the air from which he could launch his glorious ascent into the afterlife, the Great Pyramid seems to be no exception. But is there anything that calls this into question and, if so, what?

Perhaps the biggest spark in the whole debate is not why or who, but how? The scale of such a task by an ancient civilisation with very basic tools is breathtaking. The enormity and complexity of the structure has fired the imaginations of global experts - Egyptologists, scientists, engineers and architects alike - resulting in many differing construction theories as they all strive to unravel the secrets of the most enigmatic structure ever built.



# Meet the makers

### How work on the great wonder wasn't as slavish as first thought

Throughout the decades, thousands upon thousands of schoolchildren have grown up in the belief that the pyramids were built by slaves. In Hollywood epics, we watch as they are forced to drag enormous blocks of stone, their bodies undernourished, their backs lashed by the whips of vicious overseers, as they plead for water.

It was a Greek, Herodotus, who first made mention of slave labour during his visit to Egypt in 450 BCE. The thousands of labourers required for such a monument could never, in his eyes, be found through free will, and without any surviving records to tell the true story, it is a notion that has stuck right up to recent times,

fuelled by the references to Hebrew slaves in the Book of Exodus. The story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt captured the public imagination with the help of the golden age of cinema, but has little historical evidence.

The work of modern Egyptologists such as Mark Lehner and Zahi Hawass has turned these popular beliefs on their head and uncovered a much less dramatic, yet much more human face to the builders of the Great Pyramid.

Early archaeologists were just as intrigued and enthusiastic as their modern counterparts and established the bedrock for later discoveries. They were on the most part, however, interested in the

bigger picture, the awe-inspiring structures that stood before them and the power and majesty of the dynastic pharaohs they represented. The mason and the labourer were of little significance and interest until the end of the Victorian era. But every construction site has its workers and it is through their lives that the answers to tantalising questions can sometimes be revealed.

The discovery of the workers' 'village' at the site of the Giza pyramids in the 2000s opened a window into the ordinary world of men and women as they worked to create something very extraordinary. General everyday items can tell a thousand words and from this discovery came a

## The Pyramid City

Recent discoveries have uncovered a large settlement thought to house the skilled labourers of the Great Pyramid

### The cemetery

Workers and craftsmen who passed away during the construction of the Great Pyramid were buried in places of honour beside the village, often with miniature pyramids of their own.

### The Wall of Crows

This 200-metre-long ancient stone wall divides the sacred pyramid complex from the workers' village. Experts speculate that it could have served as a symbolic barrier between the land of the dead and the living.

### Tools of the trade

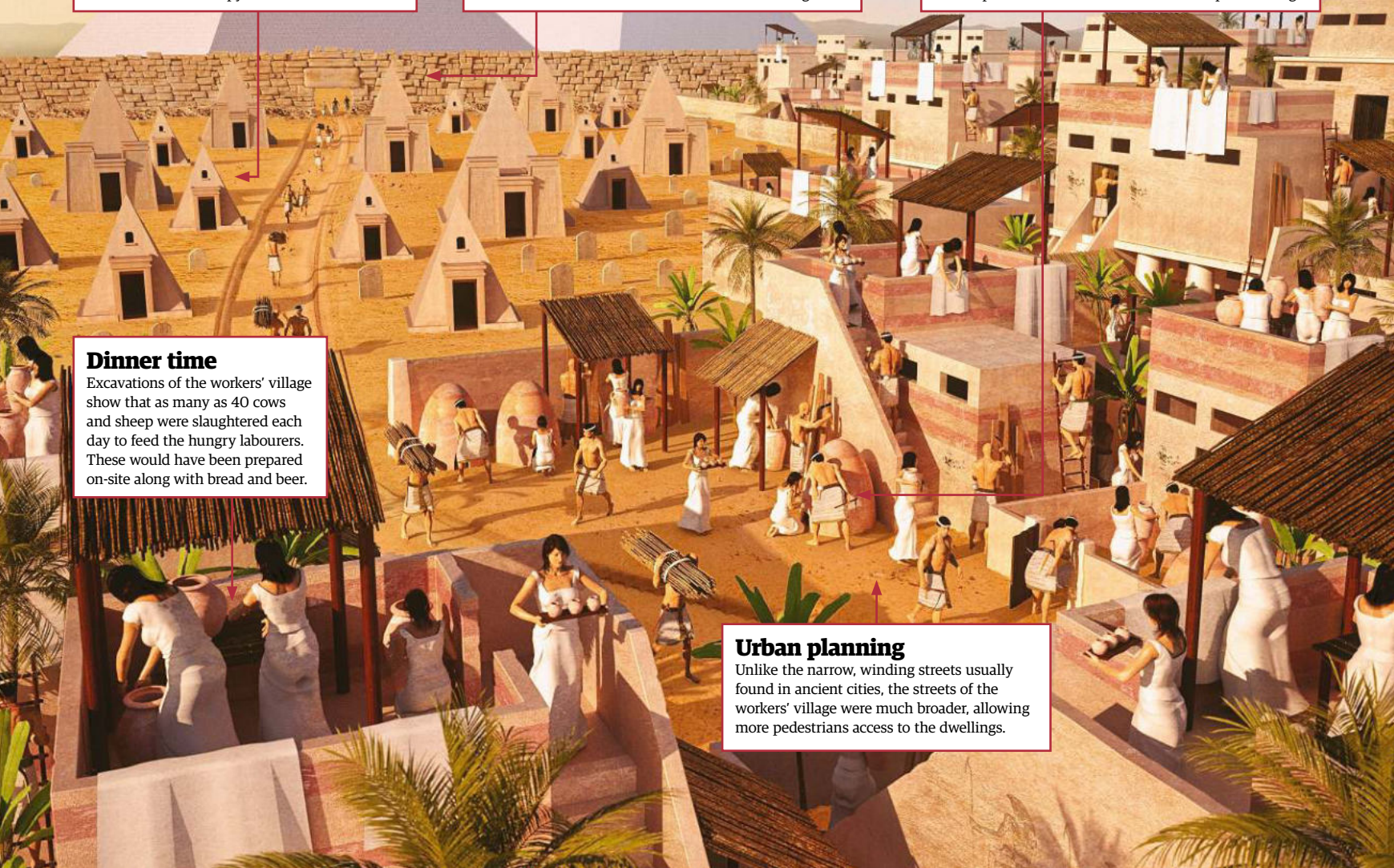
The Egyptians amassed huge amounts of copper to make the tools needed to construct the pyramids. The fumes from smelting and cooking would have caused an almost permanent haze of smoke to envelope the village.

### Dinner time

Excavations of the workers' village show that as many as 40 cows and sheep were slaughtered each day to feed the hungry labourers. These would have been prepared on-site along with bread and beer.

### Urban planning

Unlike the narrow, winding streets usually found in ancient cities, the streets of the workers' village were much broader, allowing more pedestrians access to the dwellings.







The Great Pyramid is the largest of the three pyramids in the Giza complex

new picture. However, this didn't portray slaves beaten into submission by ruthless tyrants, but honest labourers and skilled craftsmen, who were well nourished, worked hard, paid for what they did and treated with respect when they died.

What has become clear is that for such an undertaking, there had to be discipline and organisation on a vast scale, co-ordinating large cohorts of skilled craftsmen, labourers and support workers in one huge effort towards a single goal.

Burial evidence shows a hierarchy of workers at the site, from temporary seasonal workers to skilled masons, administrators and supervisors, along with their families. There was a daily ration of bread and beer, as well as fish and prime cuts of meat. It is only logical that a well-disciplined workforce needs to be cared for and an army of builders would definitely march on its stomach!

There is also evidence of medical care and on-site doctors who provided aid for a wide list

of ailments. These would have been vital in what would have been incredibly long, hard physical labour and all the dangers it would bring.

Evidence of the workers were organised has also come to light. Estimates as to the entire workforce vary from 10,000 to 20,000, (far fewer than the 100,000 estimated by Herodotus), plus another possible 20,000 temporary or part-time labourers (on site for three to four months at a time), all working from 10 to 20 years. But it is how these numbers were used and organised, that made such a vast project achievable.

Workers were broken down into groups of 2,000 and then split again into skilled and unskilled and so on until possibly as few as 20 men would form a team or 'gang' with a specific task and their own team leader. They also tended to have a particular identity, and pyramid graffiti at the third Giza pyramid proudly declares the 'Friends of Menkaure' and the 'Drunkards of Menkaure'.

However, life was of course not easy on the building site. Another previously unexplored consequence of the construction has emerged – the unification of Egypt as a nation. Although they weren't slaves forced into hard labour, in some ways the builders did not give their time freely.

Records of local leaders show that there was an obligation to the pharaoh to supply men for such projects in much the same way as feudal kings relied on their nobles to supply men-at-arms in times of war. There is also a possibility that men gave their labour instead of taxes. DNA testing on the remains of workers from the Giza village clearly demonstrates that the workforce came from all over Egypt, fulfilling an obligation and answering their pharaoh's call as homage to their god-king.

As a result, men and women from all parts of the kingdom came together, shared their lives, learned new skills, made new friends and returned home with a greater sense of unity having been part of a lasting legacy to their all-powerful ruler.

# "Men gave their labour instead of taxes"

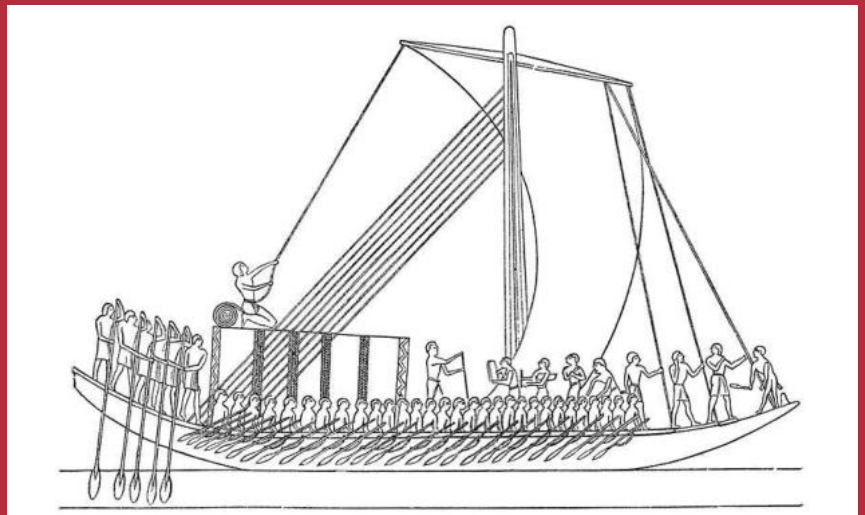
## Blockbusters

A lost scroll reveals how the workers shipped materials over 800 kilometres

While the workers may have lived next to the construction site, how did they transport the building materials? Experts have traced the granite used in the Great Pyramid's inner chamber to quarries in Aswan, 858 kilometres south of Giza. Meanwhile, the monument's outer casing required 170,000 tons of limestone. New archaeological evidence suggests that they transformed the landscape, creating a purpose-built canal system to transport it all.

A papyrus scroll found at the seaport Wadi Al-Warf offers a first-hand account. Written by Merer, an overseer in charge of a team of 40 elite workmen, the account explains how they transported two ton limestone blocks eight miles downstream from a quarry at Tura to Giza. The blocks were balanced on wooden boats, held together by rope. The overseer also describes how his crew opened giant dykes to divert water from the Nile and channel it to the pyramid through man-made water works.

To corroborate the ancient record, Mark Lehner, the American archaeologist who helped find the workers' village, believes he has mapped the lost waterways beneath the dusty Giza plateau.





# A riddle in the sands

Piecing together a giant jigsaw puzzle has revealed Giza's secrets

To match the organisational discipline of the workforce, there had to be skill and precision in the planning and calculations required for such a tremendous project. Many of the questions still debated today revolve around the details of construction. While there is some accepted common ground, differences still remain.

For those trying to solve the mystery, it has been essential to place themselves in the minds of those ancient designers and architects and ask some very fundamental questions – what are we trying to achieve and what knowledge do we have to achieve it?

We do know that at the time of the construction of the Great Pyramid, the Egyptians did not have the wheel. Nor did they have pulleys or iron tools. What they did have, however, was the knowledge and instruments to measure level surfaces and angles, both essential for the creation of precision on an amazing scale, even by modern standards.

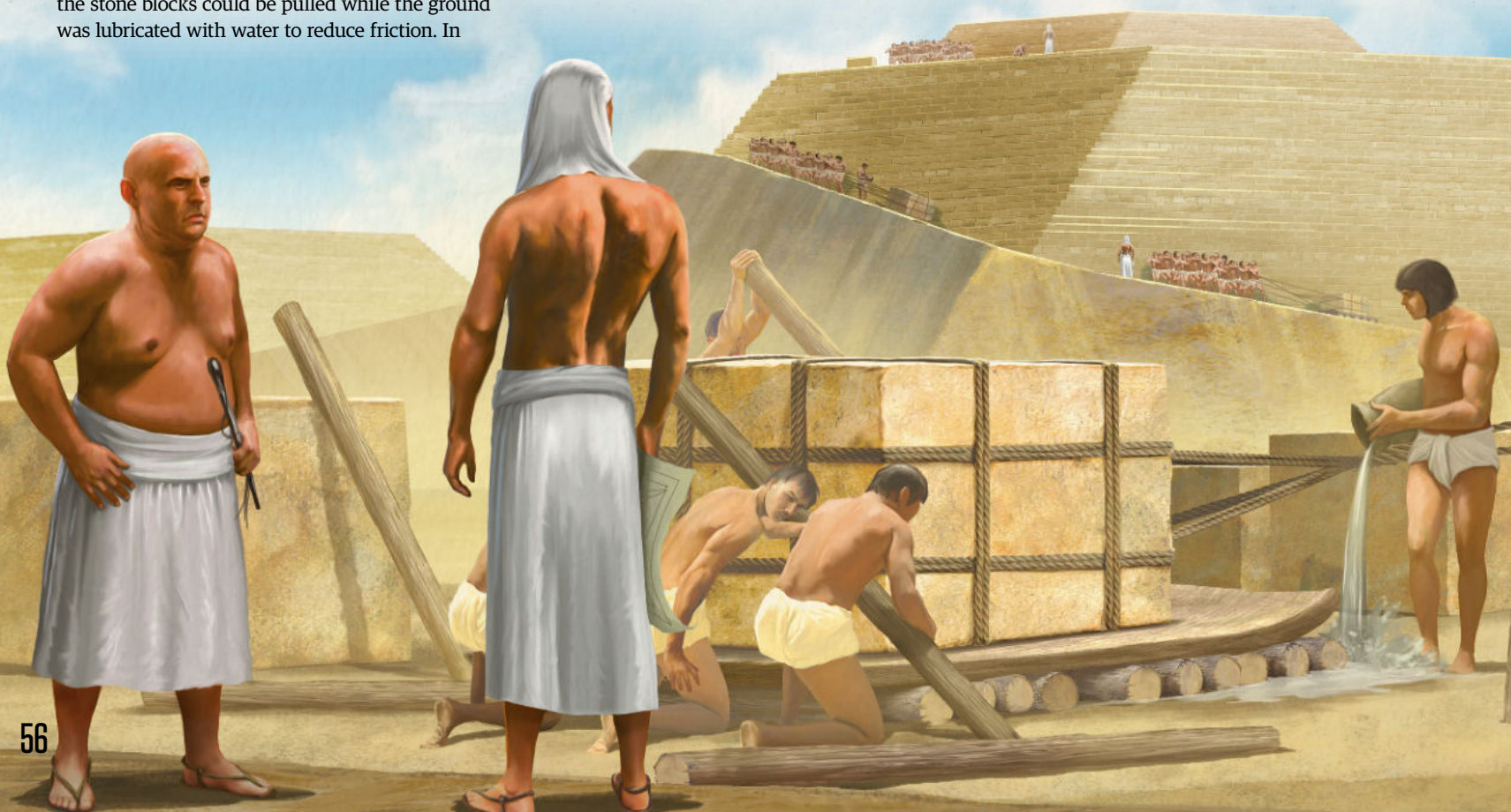
As for tools, they had the know-how to use sand and other abrasives to turn a copper saw into a much more efficient instrument that could cut through relatively soft limestone, and even the larger granite blocks with surprising success.

So the debate around the construction of the Pyramid of Khufu falls quite neatly into some very simple questions. How did they move such large blocks? Without the wheel, it is generally accepted that they were able to construct sleds on which the stone blocks could be pulled while the ground was lubricated with water to reduce friction. In



The Great Pyramid is the only ancient wonder of the world still standing

## “How did they move such large blocks?”





## The Big Build Theories

Alternative construction methods are a hot topic among Egyptologists

### Steps and levers

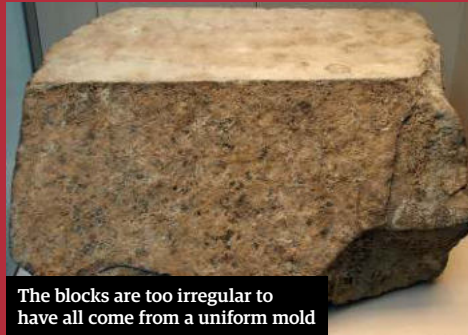
If the writings of Herodotus are to be believed — and they have been called into question by many — the construction of the pyramids was literally based upon a step-by-step method or, in his words, “stairs”. Once the foundation of the structure had been established, each successive layer was put in place, each set a little back from the edge to create a ledge on which workers could use levers to move the stone up to the next level. Once the top was reached, the outer layer of brilliant white limestone was put in place in descending order to make a smooth outer surface. However, the sheer angle at which the blocks would have to be levered and the time it would take makes this method less plausible.



This method has been called into doubt

### Concrete blocks

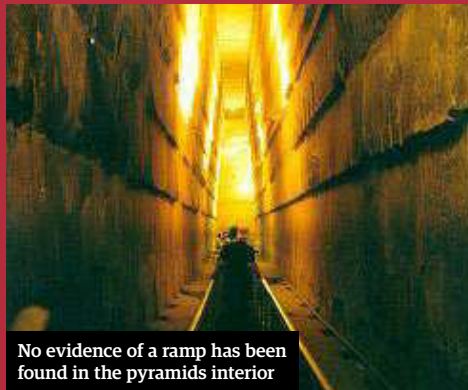
Scientist Joseph Davidovits claims that the majority of the blocks used in the Great Pyramid were not quarried at all but were moulded into shape using a kind of limestone concrete that would then set and look like a limestone block. This would, he says, reduce any transportation of heavy blocks as they would be created on site and the moulds reused. However, his hypothesis is not accepted by mainstream Egyptologists. Given the chance, workers would certainly have made their own lives easier by creating straight edges but most of the blocks are irregular in shape and size. They also show marks of chiselling and masonry working.



The blocks are too irregular to have all come from a uniform mold

### The internal ramp

French architect Jean-Pierre Houdin has developed a hypothesis in which he claims that the ramp used was internal and not external. In much the same way as the spiral ramp, at an angle of 7 degrees, Houdin claims that the external blocks were put in place first to ensure the precision of the smooth angled finish of the pyramid, with the ramp running around the structure inside the outer wall, allowing builders to work on construction either side of the ramp. Gaps on each of the corners would allow blocks to be turned at right angles and carry on up the ramp. No actual internal ramp has been found, although an unusual and unexplained gap in one corner of the pyramid has and is yet to be explored. One of the right-angled turning points? Houdin's research continues.



No evidence of a ramp has been found in the pyramids interior

fact, such a sled is displayed in excellent condition in the Museum of Cairo and there are examples of tomb decoration showing statues being pulled into place on one. Timber was a rare commodity in Egypt, much of it coming from Lebanon, and so the sleds would be well maintained and would be recycled into perhaps roof beams or even beds or furniture when no longer needed.

Perhaps the most controversial question of all is just exactly how the huge blocks of limestone, and later the even bigger blocks of granite, were manoeuvred into place with such breathtaking precision, with joints of only half a millimetre, onto a monument as it rose higher and higher from the ground.

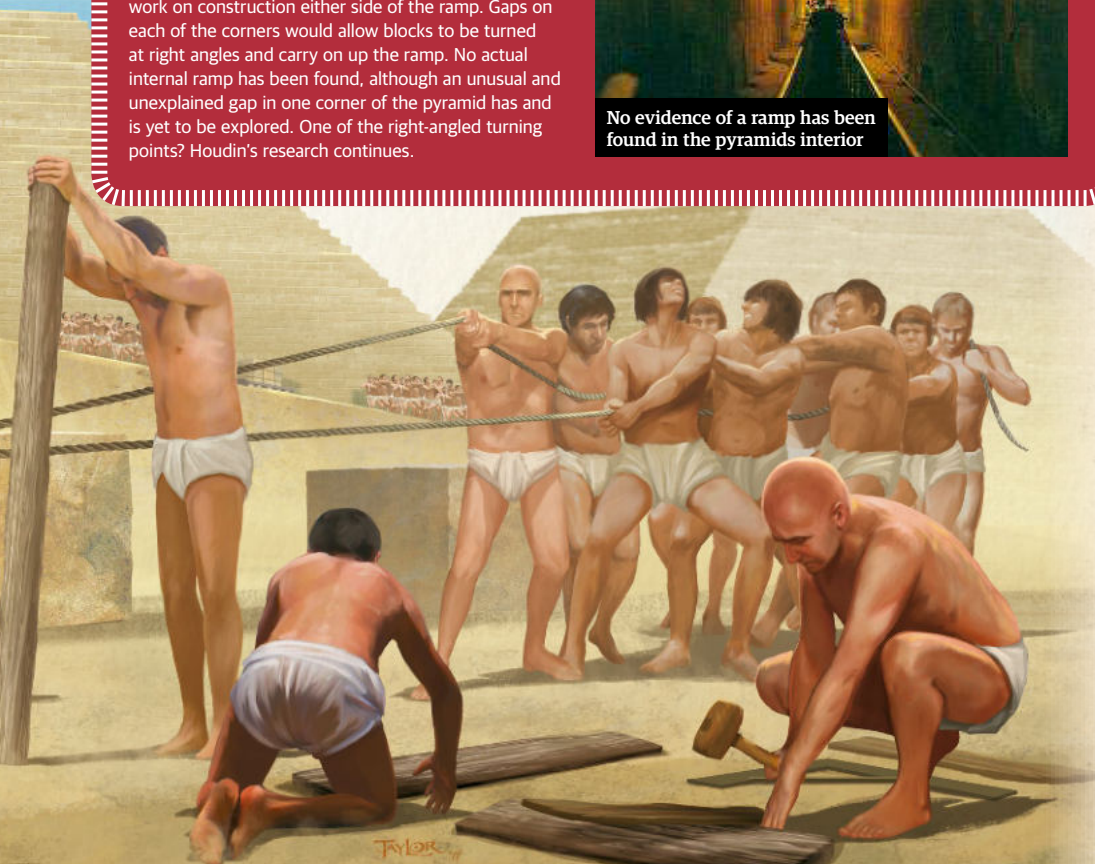
The essential starting point for construction was a level base. In the 1880s, Sir Flinders Petrie surveyed the site and concluded that the area had been dug with shallow channels and flooded so that the water established the true level and the stone worked into a flat surface between. This idea was developed by Mark Lehner 100 years later, with the hypothesis that only an area suitable for sufficient foundation was levelled. Whichever method was used, the base of the pyramid is flat to within an astonishing 15 millimetres.

Many experts agree that, in order to get such huge blocks of stone into place, they had to have used a ramp. The burning question is what kind? It is now widely understood that a straight one at right angles to the structure is the least likely answer to the mystery. The main reason for this is the sheer size of the structure required — almost as bulky as the pyramid itself — and the steepness of the angle required to reach the higher points that would be beyond the capabilities of a sled drawn by manpower.

Perhaps more promising is the zig-zag ramp, which would snake up one side of the structure with shorter lengths at a less steep angle. The main issue would be keeping it fixed to the exterior of the structure as it grew. By introducing a spiralling ramp, supported by the body of the structure itself, the architects would overcome a number of logistical obstacles.

First of all, the angle would be shallow enough for the effective pulling of the blocks. Second, it would not have to be fixed to the angled outer surface of the pyramid but would rise on top of each layer as it progressed in height. Third, the final top section of the pyramid would be put in place using levers in very much the way as described by Herodotus. In order to then fix the finely finished outer layer, the whole process would be done in reverse and the ramp dismantled as they went.

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of the pyramids' construction is the lack of any records revealing the construction techniques used on them. But the more recent work that has been undertaken moves us evermore forward in our knowledge and to resolving the mystery once and for all.





# A god-king's secret revealed

## Uncovering Khufu's last resting place

The completed pyramid and last resting place of Pharaoh Khufu is in many ways very different from other examples of the structures as burial chambers and has led to speculation as to its actual use. Thousands of years of looting and grave robbing have deprived us of studying the mummy and grave goods that would have been placed within, limiting our knowledge of what the individual chambers were used for.

# "Their purpose remains a mystery"

### King's burial chamber

This chamber houses the single sarcophagus of the pharaoh, which is slightly larger than the ascending passage and must therefore have been in place before the roof was finished. The chamber is almost entirely constructed of heavy granite blocks, some of which are 80-100 tons. Above the chamber are the stress-relieving blocks. These are an ingenious system of granite blocks, laid in such a way as to create separate chambers to take the enormous weight of the pyramid above it and distribute it away from the ceiling of the king's chamber thus preventing collapse. Two shafts align with certain stars and were also at first thought to have been for ventilation, calling into question the original purpose of the pyramid. However, it is now widely accepted that they act as a symbolic link with the afterlife.

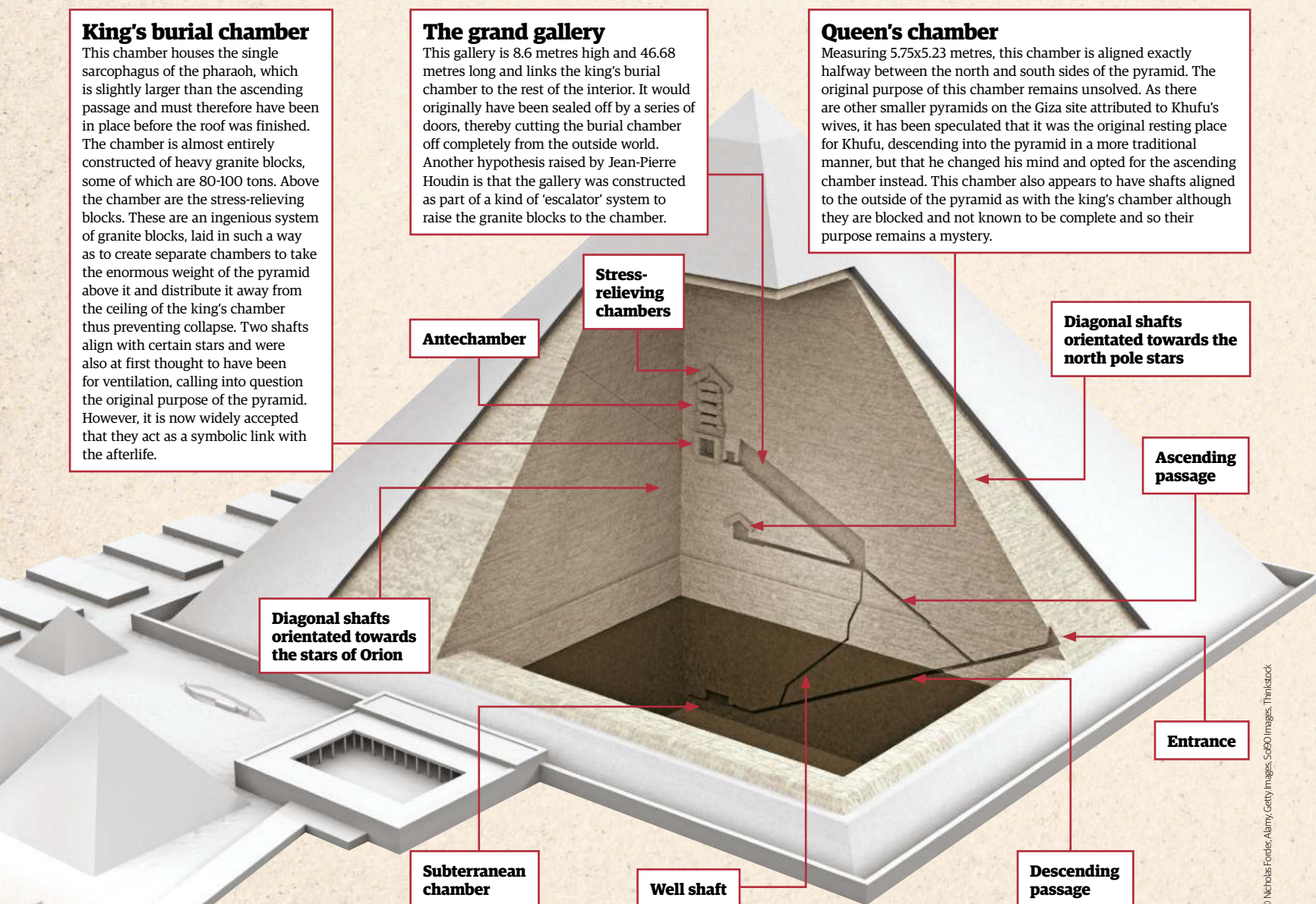
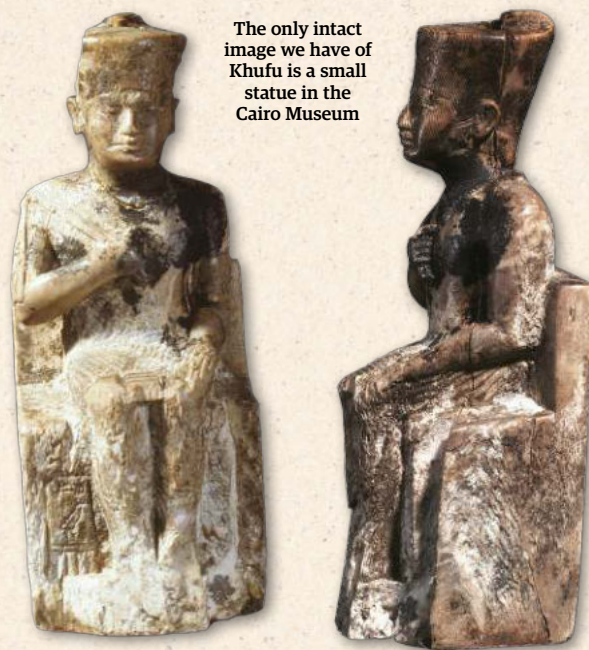
### The grand gallery

This gallery is 8.6 metres high and 46.68 metres long and links the king's burial chamber to the rest of the interior. It would originally have been sealed off by a series of doors, thereby cutting the burial chamber off completely from the outside world. Another hypothesis raised by Jean-Pierre Houdin is that the gallery was constructed as part of a kind of 'escalator' system to raise the granite blocks to the chamber.

### Queen's chamber

Measuring 5.75x5.23 metres, this chamber is aligned exactly halfway between the north and south sides of the pyramid. The original purpose of this chamber remains unsolved. As there are other smaller pyramids on the Giza site attributed to Khufu's wives, it has been speculated that it was the original resting place for Khufu, descending into the pyramid in a more traditional manner, but that he changed his mind and opted for the ascending chamber instead. This chamber also appears to have shafts aligned to the outside of the pyramid as with the king's chamber although they are blocked and not known to be complete and so their purpose remains a mystery.

The only intact image we have of Khufu is a small statue in the Cairo Museum





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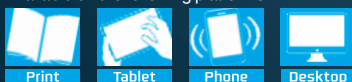


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# Frederick II

The Holy Roman Emperor was renowned for carrying out sadistic experiments – but has this inquisitive mind ahead of his time been wrongly maligned by papal propaganda?

Written by Willow Winsham

One of the most controversial rulers of his time, the 13th-century Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II was known for his grand ambitions and was nicknamed 'stupor mundi', meaning 'the astonishment of the world'. However, he was also embroiled in a life-long clash with the Church, resulting in him being excommunicated four times for his disregard for the pope's opinion. Frederick was infamous for his great curiosity in science, and the lengths he would go to in his quest for knowledge both fascinated and repelled his contemporaries.

One of the shadier matters associated with the ruler are the tales told about him by Salimbene di Adam, a contemporary Italian monk. He joined the Franciscan order in 1238 and produced several works, the most relevant to learning more about the ruler being *The Twelve Calamities of Emperor Frederick II*. The purpose of this was to highlight Frederick's faults and immoral nature, including his lack of Christian piety and disinterest in supporting the Church of Rome, and it contains varied and descriptive examples intended to fully

illustrate the emperor's wickedness. Among the most horrendous actions the monk attributes to Frederick was that he was guilty of performing a series of atrocious human experiments.

According to Salimbene, on one occasion the ruler had a hapless captive sealed inside a wooden cask or barrel and was depriving him of food and water until the unfortunate man eventually, and no doubt excruciatingly, died. As the man drew close to death, a hole was made in the barrel to test whether or not the soul could be seen leaving the body.

Salimbene also claimed that Frederick ordered two prisoners be given exactly the same dinner. After eating, one of them was then sent out hunting, while the other was told to go to bed and sleep off the large meal he had just ingested. Unknown to them, the emperor was intending to investigate the different effects that exercise and sleep might have on the digestion process. This was achieved in a most brutal manner – a few hours afterward the men had completed their activities, he had both of them

## Defining moment

### Ward of the pope

Frederick's parents died a year apart before he was even three years old. While his father, Emperor Henry VI, had been unable to secure him the German crown, his mother arranged for him to become king of Sicily and he was raised as Pope Innocent III's ward. His early loss and emotionally barren childhood undoubtedly impacted his development, perhaps explaining his short temper and cruelty in later life.

May 1198





## Hero or Villain?

FREDERICK II

### Defining moment

#### Consolidation of power

At the age of 14, Frederick took control of the Kingdom of Sicily. He went on to defeat his rival, Heinrich Raspe, for the German kingship and in 1220, at 25 years of age, he was crowned as leader of the Holy Roman Empire in Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. As a ruler, he fortified his empire, enlarged harbours, brought trade under state control and created a trained civil service to rule more efficiently.

**November 1220**

"He was embroiled  
in a life-long  
clash with the  
Church, resulting  
in him being  
excommunicated  
four times"



# Hero or Villain?

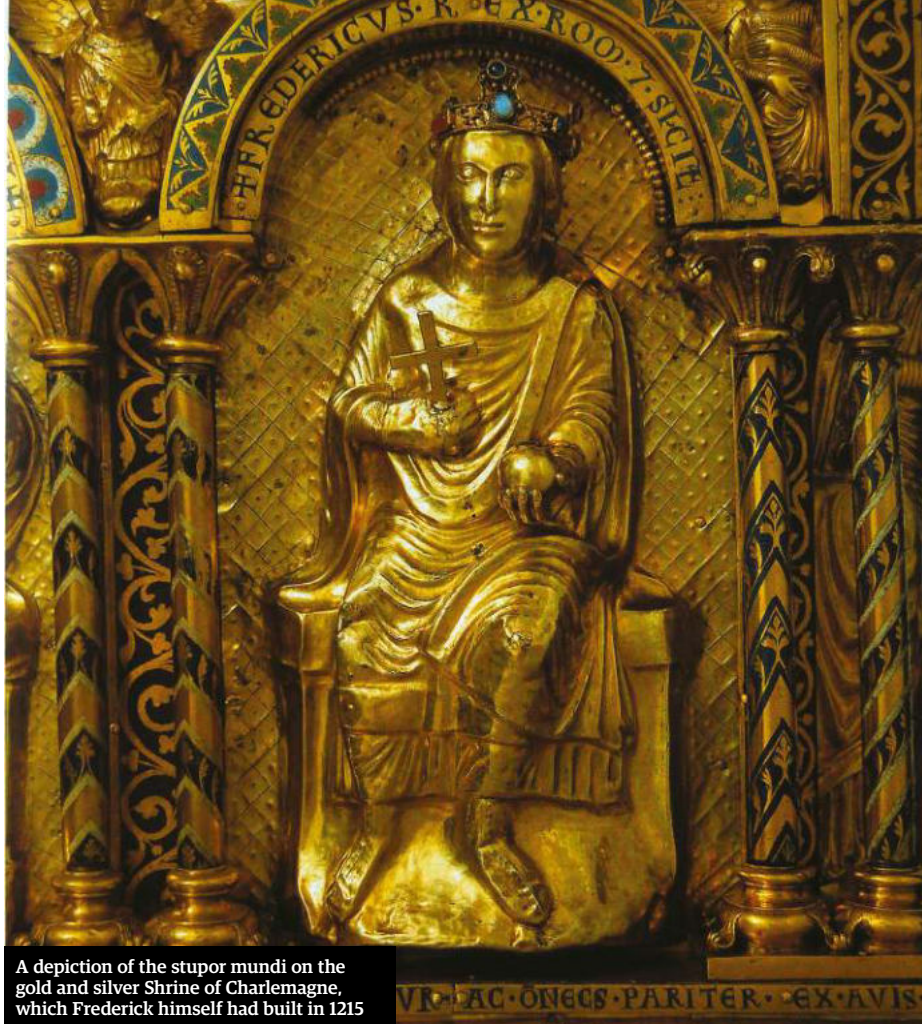
## FREDERICK II



Frederick II repeatedly clashed with the Church, in particular with Pope Gregory IX (left)



Frederick married three times, including Isabella of England in July 1235 in the newly captured city of Worms, Germany



A depiction of the stupor mundi on the gold and silver Shrine of Charlemagne, which Frederick himself had built in 1215

**"If even a grain of truth lay in Salimbene's reports, the image created of the emperor is a chilling one"**

killed and disembowelled to examine and compare the contents of their stomachs.

Perhaps the most disturbing of all the experiments gleefully related by Salimbene were the tests that Frederick reputedly had carried out on infants. In his eagerness to determine what language had been given to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, he put a group of babies into the care of nurses who were under strict instructions not to interact with them other than when absolutely necessary. The infants could be fed and bathed but no more, and they were not to be spoken to under any circumstances.

Tragically for those involved, Frederick never got an answer to the question he posed. The children, starved of any form of affection, warmth and basic interaction, died, quite simply, of a lack of love.

If even a grain of truth lay in Salimbene's reports, the image created of the emperor is a chilling one. But what proof is there for the monk's sensational claims? One thing that is clear about

Frederick from the outset is that he had a strong, and at times overwhelming, interest in all matters biological. He established several animal reserves in locations across his widespread kingdom, the most impressive example of which was a habitat for a variety of waterbirds that was maintained

at his own expense. Frederick also owned many animals, including lions and elephants, which he liked to take on his travels.

It was also recorded by reputable sources, including Frederick's own writings, that he carried out experiments, though of a less questionable nature than those recorded by Salimbene. One of these involved establishing the longevity of fish.

A copper ring was placed inside a fish's gills and it was released back into the lake that it had come from. According to legend, the very fish was rediscovered in 1497 – the copper ring was still in place, identified by a Greek inscription that read, "I am that fish which Emperor Frederick II placed in this lake with his own hand the fifth day

of October 1230." Whether or not this was purely apocryphal, that the experiment itself took place is not in question.

Frederick was also keenly interested in falconry and published a book on the subject. While standing out as being one of the first of its kind, the text also gives more evidence of the emperor's inquisitive nature, outlining various experiments that he carried out to satisfy his curiosity on the nature and habits of the birds.

At first glance, it would seem that the scientific nature that Frederick was well known for could be an argument for there being truth in Salimbene's accounts. The monk, however, had good reason to be biased against the emperor, and it may be that Salimbene's personal views somewhat coloured his portrayal of Frederick. In an age where religious belief was taken for granted and seen as part and parcel of a ruler's lot, Frederick was a self-professed sceptic when it came to matters of religion, something that was deeply shocking to those around him.

Despite growing up as a ward of the pope, Frederick does not appear to have nurtured a religious nature. Throughout his life Frederick was accused of blasphemy and of holding heretical ideas. Showing a blatant disregard for the Church, and paying no attention to the sanctions imposed upon him, Frederick was said to have called Moses,

### Defining moment

#### The king of Jerusalem

After being excommunicated for refusing to crusade, Frederick set sail for the Holy Land. However, rather than raise arms, he negotiated with Sultan al-Kamil of Egypt to obtain Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth. He crowned himself king of the territories in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Though his bloodless victory impressed other European kings, Pope Gregory IX was less pleased.

June 1228





Frederick's opulent Palermo court was known to be home to a harem of dancers, a menagerie of exotic animals and foreign sages

Muhammad and even Jesus frauds. Salimbene, a man of God and staunch supporter of the papacy, saw this as further evidence that Frederick was a dangerous man who needed to be stopped.

Another argument against the reliability of Salimbene's account is that the monk never actually met Frederick. He only ever caught a glimpse of the emperor during a visit to Parma, he had no connection with Frederick, so his treatise was likely based on second-hand accounts or was pure invention. But the monk was not the only one to view Frederick in a less than flattering light – Pope Gregory IX called him the predecessor to the Antichrist and he was also named by the poet Dante as belonging to the sixth region of Hell, that assigned to heretics.

There are also further cases for experiments being true. It has been asserted that the stomach-churning nature of Frederick's alleged experiments is the very point that argues for them being true – they were so terrible and out of the ordinary that it was therefore unlikely that the details were fabricated. At least in the case of the language experiment, Frederick was not the only ruler said to have had interests in that area. The Egyptian pharaoh Psamtik I apparently carried out a similar test in the 6th century BCE, as did King James IV of Scotland in the late 1400s.

Was the emperor the monster he has so often been painted as, then? Even Salimbene, with his open criticism, could not deny that Frederick had his good points, admitting that he was known to be charming and intelligent, well mannered and hard working. In 1224, Frederick founded the University of Naples – today known as the University of Naples Federico II in honour of its founder – and he was known as a patron of the arts and culture both within his own lands and beyond.

Frederick should also be credited with promoting good hygiene practices within the army, during medical procedures such as bloodletting, and where diet and bathing were concerned.

Although his lack of faith was viewed with suspicion, it meant that Frederick showed marked tolerance where others did not.

For example, he not only refused to massacre Muslims when given the opportunity, but instead took them into his

own armed forces and even his personal bodyguard. The emperor likewise made use of Sicilian Jews, many of whom had been expelled from elsewhere, in translating Arabic and Greek texts, setting Sicily in the role of promoter and preserver of Eastern writings and their transmission to Western Europe.

When Frederick died, some of his followers actually believed the stupor mundi might come

back to life. While his sarcophagus is actually in Palermo Cathedral, tales from the 13th century located Mount Etna as the emperor's final resting place. With intriguing similarities to the King Arthur legend, the story went that Frederick was merely sleeping within the mountain, waiting for the right time to return to the world.

A controversial figure in life and death, Frederick remains that way to this day and a statue of him has been the subject of dispute in the square in Jesi, where he was born. Monster and tyrant or enlightened and modern, the truth of Frederick's experiments will never be known, the real emperor behind the legend remaining, for now, out of reach.

### Defining moment

#### Struggle with the papacy

Frederick's openness in his heretical views and merciless expansion of his empire led him onto a collision course with Pope Gregory IX, who was concerned that the Papal States were being encircled. The pope excommunicated Frederick (again) in 1239 but this only worsened relations. The emperor invaded Lombardy, burning Umbria to the ground and only didn't attack Rome because Gregory died.

**March 1239**

### Hero or villain?

#### HEROISM

An inquiring mind ahead of his time, the few experiments we have first-hand accounts of were nowhere near as cruel as have been claimed.

#### VILLAINY

Rumoured experiments aside, Frederick was known to dish out cruel punishments and ruled despotically, modelling himself on the classical Roman emperors.

#### LEGACY

While the ruler's royal line quickly faded after his death, the stupor mundi lives on in the Italian university he founded as well as in more spurious legends.

Was Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II a hero or a villain? Let us know what you think

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# What if... China had discovered America first?

The 15th-century explorer Zheng He is famed for travelling far and wide, but even if he had reached the New World, it might still have been Europeans that colonised it

Written by Jonathan O'Callaghan

**Zheng He, born in 1371, is known as a great explorer during the Ming dynasty, undertaking seven voyages to distant lands. But who was he really?**

He was a close advisor and a person in the inner circle of the second emperor of the Ming dynasty. He was officially a eunuch, meaning he was not a legitimate officer or official, and he later became an admiral of the Chinese Imperial Navy in his late 20s and early 30s. He ascended from very humble beginnings. Being the personal advisor of the emperor, he was in fact involved in a coup d'état, which was successfully plotted by his master, who then became the new emperor. His life is full of incidents, conspiracies and plots.

**How did Zheng He rise to his position of admiral and what was happening in China at the time?**

The first emperor of the Ming Dynasty [Zhu Yuanzhang, 1328-98] was a very capable and ambitious man and had climbed up from a leader of several armies against the Mongols. Eventually he not only defeated the Mongols but also united China.

But once he became emperor, he had to find his successor among his sons and he wasn't happy with the choice. So he chose his grandson and jumped one generation [but there was a plot against him by one of his sons, Zhu Di, in 1402]. In that plot, Zheng He was one of the key advisors – that says a lot about him.

**Zheng He is known to have travelled far and wide, but what were the purposes of his expeditions?**

This is very controversial. The official line is that he did it for China to show off the country's soft and hard power. The former being diplomacy skills and traditions while the latter is showing off the navy by sailing record distances and visiting a record number of foreign destinations. But that was just what those in power put out there.

## INTERVIEW WITH... DR KENT DENG



Dr Kent Deng is a professor of economic history at the London School of Economics. He is an expert in Chinese maritime

history and has written numerous publications on the voyages and expeditions of Zheng He, including his impact on Chinese history and the nature of his travels.

The unofficial line from my research is quite different. Why would the emperor send his key advisor overseas? My hunch is that Zheng He knew too much about the plot [against the Ming emperor], so Zhu Yuanzhang exiled him with dignity overseas. He continuously made seven voyages so that he would spend the rest of his adult life at sea, not coming back to China. He eventually died at sea, possibly on the way to Malacca [in Malaysia].

**There are few records left on the exploits of Zheng He – what do we know about his expeditions from the limited information available?**

He basically covered all possible or known destinations in the Indian Ocean. That was the only record. His logs were systematically destroyed by the Ming court, but so far as we know he went to several ports in India, the Persian Gulf and East Africa. He had several detachments so he actually sent his men away from his main forces to explore other possibilities.

He would have two detachments plus his own main force, so there would be three routes taken by his men at the same time. His fleet once had something like 200 vessels but if they all landed in any harbour they would fight for resources like fresh water and meat. It's better to have detachments so that the pressure on your land-based resources isn't that great. He would often control his own fleet with a dozen or so large ships and the rest of his men would take different routes to the rest of Asia.

**During one of his voyages, is it possible he could have gone to America by accident or otherwise?**

Yes, technically it is a possibility. By sheer accident, they could have got lost and some of them maybe would have landed. It would probably take a long time, being forced by storms or currents, but they would have had enough resources and know-how to take refuge in places like California.



"They would have had enough  
resources and know-how to take  
refuge in places like California"



Zheng He could have supplanted Columbus,  
35 years before the Italian was born



## What If... CHINA HAD DISCOVERED AMERICA FIRST?

### If Zheng He had discovered America, would it have changed his standing among people in China?

Probably not. He was not a real officer but a servant of the inner chamber of a Ming emperor. Moreover, he was not ethnically Chinese, he was Muslim, and he wasn't a member of the elite. People wouldn't listen to him.

### How might Zheng He have reached America?

I would say not on purpose. By accident, anything can happen. It's possible he could have unintentionally gone to America on the furthest points of his voyages. Their longest leg of a single journey was close to 4,000 or 5,000 kilometres so with that kind of a capacity, they can probably manage to cross the Pacific Ocean. However, the problem for them is that the ocean currents don't move across the Pacific, but from China to the seas of Japan, then from Japan to Alaska, from Alaska to Seattle, and from Seattle all the way to Mexico. If you want to ride from Mexico to China it's easy, but they would have a huge task to sail against the ocean current. If they tried to go to the Americas, the chances are they would probably wreck in Japan or Alaska.

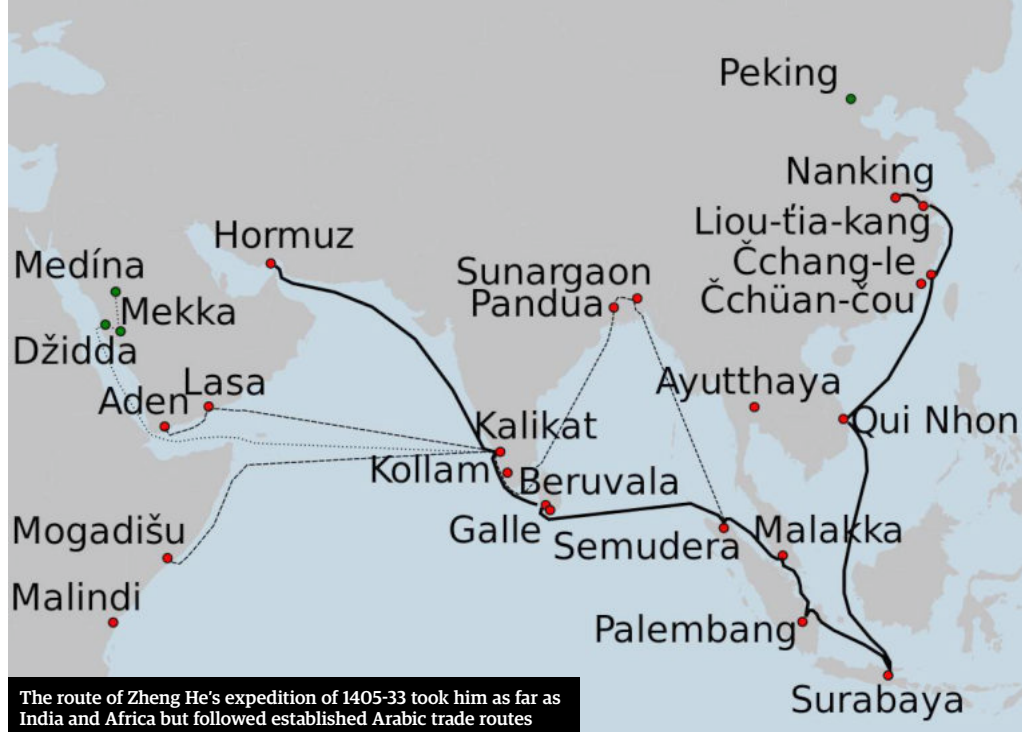
### If he didn't go to the West Coast, is there another way Zheng He could have reached America?

It took the Spaniards 60 years to learn how to return to Mexico from the Philippines. They had to travel through Malacca, all the way across the Atlantic Ocean. They had to circumnavigate the whole globe to go back to Mexico, so I wonder whether Zheng He and his men could have had that kind of knowledge.

There's a possibility for them to get completely lost after the Cape of Good Hope [in South Africa] and then enter the Atlantic, and then surely the ocean current would bring them to Central America. Then they would have had a good chance to return home from the other end [by travelling across the Pacific on the ocean currents].

### What might have happened had he landed in America?

The Chinese sailors would do everything to return home – China offered individual and private land ownership so you



"The Chinese sailors would do everything to return home"

can actually live very comfortably once you make money. You could buy land, become a landlord, plus you had family ties, and so they would have been really reluctant to establish another China or a colony outside of the empire. Most Chinese, 99 per cent, would have gone back to where they really belonged, with one exception – criminals.

I don't think that once the Chinese landed they would immediately start a new kingdom like the Europeans did. By the time of Zheng He, China had more than a 1,000-year-long history of private family-based property rights so people would always have returned.

### How might the elite in China have reacted to the discovery of America?

We can only speculate about how news of the New World would have been greeted in China. Zheng He's fleet went to East Africa and brought a giraffe back to the Imperial Court – this was the closest to a new world that Zheng He got and

## How would it be different?



**Further exploration**  
Zheng He returns home but is sent out again on more voyages to India, the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa. **1407**



**Ocean burial**  
On his seventh and final voyage to Arabia and East Africa, Zheng He dies from disease and is buried at sea. **1433**

**Real timeline**

**Alternate timeline**

**Lost at sea**  
A freak storm sends Zheng He and his entire fleet off course, ultimately causing them to sail across the Atlantic Ocean. **1407**



**Age of discovery**  
Zheng He and his crew make landfall in America, reaching the New World long before Europe. **1408**



# What if... CHINA HAD DISCOVERED AMERICA FIRST?

ordinary Chinese did not seem to care too much about his adventures. But although they would be unlikely to start a colony there, they might have been interested in meeting and trading with Native Americans.

## Would a Chinese discovery of America change its history at all?

No, simply because the Chinese wouldn't have stayed. They would have probably got sweet potatoes and chilli and started a new business in China by growing and selling them. But a great empire – they just wouldn't have that incentive.

## Would China have shared the news from this expedition with the rest of the world?

That I don't know. Zheng He was not popular in his time – he spent a lot of money from the Chinese treasury and brought back nothing to the empire to show for it. There was also a conservative school of very powerful people against him, so much so that once people in Beijing heard that he had died in his last voyage, they quickly decided this must be the end of all voyages. They burned all of Zheng He's logs, all of the records, and even went so far as to destroy their vessels and close the shipyards.

Inside China, his journeys were considered extravagant and very economically unreasonable, so for this reason there's no official record left of any of it. His two lieutenants wrote and published a personal account of their travels each and these were circulated among the Chinese elite. They were full of strange stories – for example, they say that on one island people only had one eye and it was on their forehead. I think the lieutenants were trying to make sailing for profit very attractive but no one really had the drive or ambition to go and find a new land themselves.

## If the news of his discovery had been shared, would it have made the Europeans go earlier?

Yes, I would think so. We do have some surviving evidence showing that Zheng He probably passed some of his maps to the Arabs, and in turn the Arabs passed them onto the Europeans. There was huge money changing hands because it was very, very valuable information.

## Would America have been colonised before Columbus even began his first voyage in 1492?

I think the Europeans would have jumped at the first opportunity to conquer America, as history has told us, so maybe Zheng He would have been hired by the Spaniards in the place of Columbus. It is worth mentioning that Zheng He was a hired gun, a mercenary, and would have done whatever he was told as long as he was paid. He was certainly willing to go where the money was.

He decided to offer himself as a eunuch, which is really very unusual. Most Chinese wouldn't do it as it meant you wouldn't have a family any more. But being a non-Chinese Muslim, this is a price to pay. So he probably would have been hired by the Portuguese or Spain or England. He would have spearheaded this colony outside China in the Americas and he would have probably become someone like Columbus, a governor of some sort. He's a very open-minded, flexible man – I admire him in that sense – but I doubt he would have had a Chinese following.

## Would Zheng He be as famous today as Columbus if he had discovered America?

It's hard to say. He and his men left tablets and statues in southeastern and south Asia but very few Chinese knew about them. His fame really began after 1949 as a means to promote Chinese nationalism, although Zheng He was not Chinese, Confucian or Buddhist.

Zheng He was an interesting man, but the bottom line is that he was a marginal and unconventional figure. He managed to manoeuvre very smartly from a remote province of China at the edge of the empire to being in the heart of the country and becoming a personal servant of the emperor, involved in a conspiracy and a coup d'état. Then he got into trouble and he was exiled at sea for the rest of his life. That is really an extraordinary story.



An early 17th-century woodcut of Zheng He's fleet of treasure ships

**The New World**  
Italian explorer Christopher Columbus 'discovers' America, ushering in an age of colonisation. **1492**



**All hands on deck**  
John Cabot arrives on mainland North America in the name of Great Britain. France and Portugal soon follow. **1497**

**Colonisation**  
The Europeans begin to colonise the Americas in earnest, claiming various lands as their own. **16th century**



**Columbus Day**  
On the 300th anniversary of his discovery, the US declares that 12 October be known as Columbus Day. **1792**



**Home sweet home**  
Zheng He is heralded as a hero for discovering a new world – but China shows no interest in colonisation. **1410**

**Early colonisation**  
England, France and Portugal rush to follow suit, claiming land in the Americas as they see fit. **1420**

**Declaration of Independence**  
The United States of America becomes the first nation to declare independence from Europe, seceding from Great Britain. **1776**



**European colonisation**  
The Europeans colonise the Americas, but the new nations ultimately declare independence from their founding countries. **15th century**

**The voyage home**  
After trading goods and sharing information with the natives, Zheng He and his fleet set sail for their home country. **1409**

**Zheng He for hire**  
Hearing of his voyage, Spain pays a high price for Zheng He to return to America at the head of a Spanish fleet. **1412**

**Christopher who?**  
Zheng He leads a successful expedition to colonise the Americas, 35 years before Columbus is even born. **1416**

**Chinese isolation**  
Despite the exploits of the Europeans, China remains isolated and does not venture to the Americas. **1450**



**Zheng He Day**  
On the 300th anniversary of his discovery, the US declares that 12 October be known as Zheng He Day. **1716**





# *Bluffer's Guide* EUROPE, 133 BCE – 27 BCE

## The Fall of the Roman Republic

### *Did you know?*

Julius Caesar was never an emperor. Instead, he installed himself as 'dictator in perpetuum' just prior to his assassination in 44 BCE.

### Timeline

133 BCE



The murder of tribune Tiberius Gracchus sparks a chain of events that ultimately leads to the Roman Republic's downfall.

107 BCE



General Gaius Marius becomes consul and abolishes the requirement to own property before being able to join the army.

1 NOVEMBER 82 BCE



Following his rebellion, Sulla defeats the remnants of Marius' supporters at the Battle of the Colline Gate to secure power.

17 MARCH 45 BCE



Caesar's decisive victory in Munda, Spain, ends the civil war and enables him to install himself as ruler of Rome.



# Bluffer's Guide

## THE FALL OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

The naval Battle of Actium between Mark Antony and Caesar's heir Octavian decided the fate of the Roman Republic



### What was it?

After centuries of peace and prosperity, aided by almost untrammelled expansion across the Mediterranean, the Roman Republic was plunged into crisis in 133 BCE following the murder of popular official Tiberius Gracchus, a killing allegedly sanctioned by the Senate. The following years were marked by social unrest as politicians battled it out. General Gaius Marius, a successful military campaigner, seized the office of consul in 107 BCE.

In 88 BCE, following a challenge for power from Lucius Sulla, Marius' quaestor (state treasurer), who subsequently rebelled against Rome, a reign of terror ensued that purged many of the people's representatives.

Sulla died in 78 BCE only to be replaced by Gnaeus Pompeius, better known as Pompey the Great, who would later serve in Rome's First Triumvirate alongside Marcus Crassus and Julius Caesar.

Pompey and Caesar quickly became entrenched in their respective positions, leading to a series of civil wars that would culminate in Octavian (Caesar's adopted heir) becoming the first emperor of Rome in 27 BCE, heralding the end of the Republic.



### What were the consequences?

The fall of the Roman Republic witnessed the decline of a democratic system that had governed the state since its foundation in 509 BCE following the overthrow of the hated Roman monarchy.

After the disposal of the kings, the title of consul was introduced and shared between two men. More power was also granted to the senate, and tribunes (officials) were elected to represent the people. However, this style of governance was changed by the Republic's demise.

The social unrest and military opportunism that blighted Rome in the last century BCE and led to Julius Caesar eventually snatching power effectively put an end to a system of rule that had heeded the requests of the people. And while Caesar's rapacious ambition would lead to his downfall, his heir, Octavian, swiftly picked up the mantle to establish total power as emperor in 27 BCE. An emperor would rule Rome until 476 CE.



### Who was involved?

#### Lucius Sulla

139 BCE – 78 BCE

Upon consolidating power in 82 BCE, Sulla ruled as a dictator, purging many elected officials and stripping others of power.



#### Julius Caesar

100 BCE – 44 BCE

After crushing the remains of Pompey's men at the Battle of Munda, Caesar took control of Rome, eventually becoming dictator.



#### Emperor Augustus

63 BCE – 14 CE

Victory over Mark Antony at Actium allowed Octavian to cement his grip on power and later become the first emperor of Rome.



15 MARCH 44 BCE



Julius Caesar, having recently proclaimed himself dictator for life, is stabbed to death by a host of senators.

16 JANUARY 27 BCE



Caesar's heir becomes Emperor Caesar Augustus of Rome, having dispatched Mark Antony's forces four years earlier in the Final War of the Roman Republic.



# 10 STOCK UP YOUR SUPPLIES

If you're lucky, you'll have advanced warning of any army that's coming to take your town so before they arrive, gather all the supplies you might need inside your walls. Food in your stores is better than food in your enemy's belly.

Whatever you can't bring inside you should burn to stop it being used by the besiegers. When the enemy is running low on food and reduced to eating roots, they will find it

dispiriting to see those inside fat and hearty. One Slovenian baron tossed fresh cherries at his besiegers to show how ample his supplies were.

Fire can be used by your enemy, so prepare for this by filling barrels with water along the wall while you have plenty of it or you may be left in the unfortunate position of sacrificing your wine supplies to fight blazes, as the defenders of Exeter in 1136 had to. Keeping your water supplies flowing will be vital to your survival – plan ahead by digging wells or extending your walls to enclose your source.







# 10

## WAYS TO SURVIVE A SIEGE

So the enemy is at the gate... Here's a few tips from the Medieval world to help you make it out alive

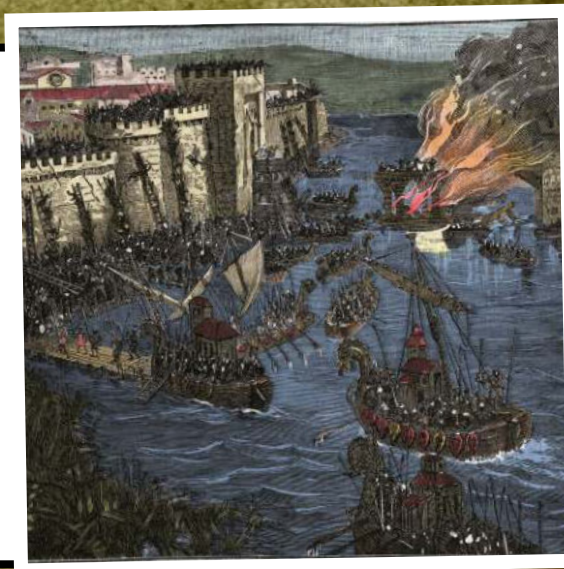
Written by Ben Gazur

**P**itched battles between large armies in the field may be where knights won their spurs and kings their glorious reputations, but it was often in the grimmer warfare of sieges where history was decided. It is in just such a tight spot you find yourself now – the enemy is at

the gate. Many sieges ended in negotiated settlements but you are determined to fight to the end. Resistance against an invading army was usually not too welcome, so if a besieged city was taken by force then those inside could usually expect little mercy. If you want to survive, these are the ten tips you need to know.

### 9 GET BUILDING

Just because you are under siege, doesn't mean it is too late to build your defences. Holes can be knocked in walls to allow you to shoot your attackers from safety. Siege engines can be constructed from the wood of demolished buildings in a pinch. At the Siege of Paris in 885, Vikings cut off the city by blockading its two bridges, which the French were defending from towers. The Vikings attacked with siege engines, hurling stones at the towers. The French showed their defiance by building an extra storey on the tower overnight.





8

## CHECK YOUR TOILETS

Any hole in a wall is a weakness – even one smeared in filth. Château Gaillard was the key to England's holdings in Normandy and when Philip II of France besieged it in 1204, he found the castle well defended and the terrain made assault difficult. A garderobe, a simple toilet that jutted from the walls, provided Philip an opportunity to capture the castle. A brave, or anosmic, man crawled up the filthy shaft and entered an unguarded chapel window, helping others to follow him inside. The castle quickly capitulated. It is not recorded if the king shook his soldier's hand afterwards.



7

## KEEP AN EAR TO THE GROUND

Don't let your enemy undermine you. In the world of Medieval sieges, mining was the term used to describe tunnelling under walls. A wall can withstand a lot of punishment from rams and stones, but by digging under it you can make it crack and crumble. The tunnel would be supported by wooden beams that, once the tunnel was complete, would be burned to collapse it and the wall above. At the Siege of Rochester in 1215, King John used the fat of 40 pigs to fire the mines.

To defend yourself against mining, you can try to detect the work going on beneath you. At Caen, bowls of water were placed on the walls and the vibrations below would show as ripples on the water's surface, allowing the defenders to locate the enemy miners. When Rhodes came under attack in 1522, bells served as the early warning signal of mining, and would ring whenever digging was nearby.

To defeat the enemy miners, you can make a counter tunnel and if you dig beneath the enemy, try to cave in their mine before they reach your walls. You can also break directly into the enemy mine and take the fight to them – as Henry V did in a subterranean square-off against the French commander at Melun.







6

## GET CREATIVE

When Vikings besieged Chester in 907 they attempted to breach the walls by tunnelling directly through them and to shield their men from attack, they built a covered walkway to work under. The citizens of Chester had to find a way to stop them. Stones dropped from above broke through the roof, but the Vikings just remade it stronger. The defenders boiled up water and ale and poured it on the unfortunate men below "so their skin peeled off them." The Vikings put a waterproof layer of animal skins on their walkway. With a diabolical ingenuity the people of Chester gathered all the beehives in the city and dropped them from the walls. The understandably annoyed insects stung the Vikings and they soon abandoned the siege.

When the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I, known as Barbarossa, put the Italian city of Crema under siege he employed mobile towers to try and breach the walls. The townsfolk retaliated by throwing red hot iron bars that stuck in the wood of their siege engines and towers and set them on fire.

Pitted against an overwhelming number of Ottoman attackers during the Siege of Eger Castle, Hungarian defenders stuffed a millstone with explosives and rolled it into the enemy, creating panic. If oil, arrows, and stones run out don't worry, almost anything you have to hand can become a weapon. At the siege of Caen one of Edward III's men attempted to scale the walls on a ladder only to have burning straw rain down on him. The burned man fell from his ladder, dying of his wounds. Even teeth can become a weapon with one Portuguese soldier knocking his own out at Siege of Diu to shoot at the Turks when he had expended the rest of his ammunition.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

**Here are some of the deadly weapons that you will face on the walls**

### Trebuchets

Trebuchets are some of the most formidable, being able to launch a 90kg projectile over 300m, making a mockery of all but the strongest fortifications. Catapults can also be used for this purpose but are also able to fire other projectiles, like corpses, that help spread disease in besieged cities. If the enemy has access to gunpowder then cannons might be used to breach walls and terrify enemies with their noise, smoke and fire.



### Greek fire

Attackers don't just have to rely on brute force and chemistry can be just as effective as stones. Greek fire, a flammable liquid, could burn on water and bring ruin to fleets of ships, towns and castles. Attackers have been known to use them in so-called 'hand-siphons,' effectively a Medieval form of handheld flamethrower.



### Poisoned wells

A more nefarious way to strike at attackers would be poison. Rotting carcasses, human or animal, could be dumped in a spring to spoil the water. If that failed, then sulphur and other chemicals could be used.

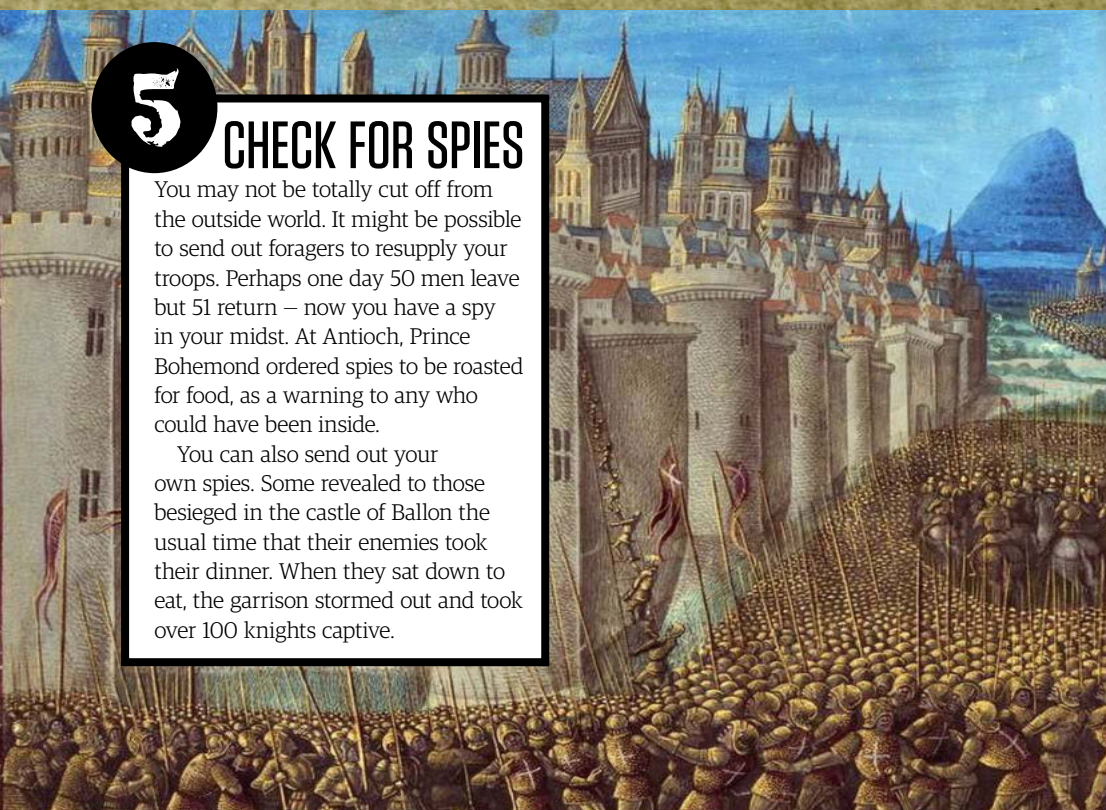


5

## CHECK FOR SPIES

You may not be totally cut off from the outside world. It might be possible to send out foragers to resupply your troops. Perhaps one day 50 men leave but 51 return – now you have a spy in your midst. At Antioch, Prince Bohemond ordered spies to be roasted for food, as a warning to any who could have been inside.

You can also send out your own spies. Some revealed to those besieged in the castle of Ballon the usual time that their enemies took their dinner. When they sat down to eat, the garrison stormed out and took over 100 knights captive.





# 10 Ways to Survive a Siege

4

## STEEL YOUR NERVE

The enemy outside your walls will try anything to make you surrender. Taunts can be effective if they get you to leave your stronghold in an ill-timed attack. Loved ones might be shown before the walls in chains with nooses around their necks to get you to capitulate. Devizes Castle fell when Matilda of Ramsbury was faced with the sight of her son in a noose in the besiegers' camp.

You must be prepared to face such threats or even make them yourself. Show your hostages off and explain what you will do to them unless they lift the siege. A body hanging from a wall is a message that can be read from a great distance.

Mockery will be shouted to lure you out so don't leave your defensive position – retaliate with your own taunts. At the Siege of Lisbon, the Moors helpfully reminded the attacking Crusaders that while they were suffering the harsh realities of a military campaign, their wives might be snug in bed at home making illegitimate children.

You must be prepared to take any action to survive. When King John was besieging Rochester, a man armed with a crossbow saw him within range of the castle walls. He asked for permission from his commander William d'Aubigny to kill the king but was told not to. If he hadn't been so scrupulous, the siege may have been saved, but King John went on to capture the castle. The crossbowman retorted, "In a similar situation the king would not spare you."

## 3 GET USED TO EATING ANYTHING

Not knowing how long a siege may last and with so many mouths to feed, you might be forced to cast out anyone who isn't vital to the defence. It may seem harsh but when the food runs out, conditions could be even harsher. During the Third Siege of Gibraltar, the residents of The Rock ran so low on food that they were reduced to eating strips of boiled leather.

At Rouen in 1418, we are told that the population had to make do with cats, dogs, mice and rats. A rat cost the princely sum of 30 pence, while a mouse could be bought for sixpence. Hungry men could also be found at Antioch with their mouths bleeding from chewing on thistles.

Things may become so bad that the wine and ale run out. Don't fret though, in times of great need, sewers, urine and horse blood can all tapped as sources of precious hydration.

During the First Crusade, the defenders at the Siege of Ma'arra were reduced to cannibalism. According to multiple sources, they cut chunks off the Saracen dead and roasted them to stay alive.





## 2

## ESCAPE

Perhaps things have become unbearable and escape is your only chance of survival. During the Anarchy, Empress Matilda was besieged in Oxford Castle. In one of the most dramatic scenes of the war, Matilda, dressed in white, made her escape across the frozen river having climbed down the walls via a rope. She clearly had a flair for the dramatic as she had previously fled the siege of Devizes disguised as a corpse.

Only small groups can flee surreptitiously so you'll have to be clever if you want to evacuate the whole garrison. At Weinsberg, the town women were chivalrously allowed to leave with anything they could carry. The women emerged with their husbands on their backs, to the amusement of the besiegers, and all were allowed to leave.



## 1

## ARM EVERYONE

With the very slim chance of reinforcements during a siege, you'll have to be prepared to arm anyone and everyone to aid in the defence.

It was often the case that women would be left in charge of castles and cities while their husbands were away on military service. When her family was betrayed by the king of France, Joanna of Flanders, now known as Fiery Joanna, took the defence of Hennebont into her own hands. She dressed in armour and rode through the streets to encourage the defenders. She instructed women of all classes to help by carrying rocks and pots of corrosive quicklime to the walls to pitch at the attackers. She also led a sortie out against the besiegers, fighting her way into the heart of the enemy camp.

It wasn't just highborn ladies who took up arms, however, as the Burgundians assaulting the town of Beauvais in 1472 soon found out. Defended by only 300 men, the town's women rallied behind Jeanne Laisné, better known as Joan the Hatchet. As the Burgundian standard was raised on the walls, Joan rushed at the attackers with a hatchet and sent both men and the flag tumbling from the walls. Her bravery rallied defenders' spirits and carried the day. Joan was given a parade in her honour by the French king and granted a marriage to her lover.

When Simon de Montfort besieged the Cathars in Toulouse, he was struck in the head and killed by a stone launched from a trebuchet operated by a woman. A painting in the town hall of Toulouse shows the woman who cast the stone being carried up to heaven by cheering crowds.







# FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

How one woman went from slavery to a hero of US history

Written by Frances White

**W**hile women were not officially allowed to fight in the US military until 2013, there have been hundreds of cases of them posing as men to do just that since the Revolutionary War. When gender roles were more defined, donning trousers, cutting their hair and binding their breasts was enough to convince almost anyone a woman was male.

However, far more seldom recorded were African-American women who hid their identities to serve on the front lines. It is possible that there were more and that they have simply slipped between the pages as history, as much early black history in the US has done. But there is a story we do know, and for all intents and purposes, it is that of the first African-American woman to serve in the US Army: Cathay Williams.

The most remarkable thing about Williams is actually how unremarkable her origins were. Born in Independence, Missouri, in 1842, Williams' mother was a slave but her father was a free man. She worked for a rich white family, the Johnsons, as a house servant on their plantation not far from Jefferson City. When the American Civil War broke out, Union soldiers occupied the city and claimed that all black slaves were 'contraband'.



Many escaped slaves, referred to as 'contraband', were put to work as labourers



Williams didn't have much of a choice; she hadn't experienced freedom her entire life and now she found herself transferred from one white man to another. Slave or not, Jefferson had been her home, the only one she had ever known, and she wasn't keen to leave it. But like all other black slaves, she had no say in the matter. Aged just 17, Colonel Benton of the 13th Army Corps forcibly carried Williams away from her old life of slavery and into a new one.

Captured slaves were pressed into the Union's war machine. Although President Lincoln had initially rejected the idea (fearing armed black regiments would lead the border states to secede), by 1862 the number of Union volunteers was plummeting and the ample resource of ex-slaves in their hands proved too hard to resist. The Union swelled their ranks not only with black soldiers but also carpenters, cooks, guards, nurses, spies, surgeons and even chaplains.

Williams served in the 8th Indiana Volunteer Infantry Regiment as a cook and washerwoman. This work may sound dull but they travelled across the country, through Arkansas, Louisiana and Georgia, and were present at several decisive clashes. This included the Battle of Pea Ridge in Arkansas in 1862, a victory for the Union that saw them defeat a vastly larger Confederate force. She also accompanied the troops during the Red River Campaign, which saw thousands of lives lost with very little to show for it.

Williams was exposed to the cost of war and the entirety of what it comprised – victory, loss and

sacrifice. For many girls her age, this would have been terrifying but, judging by her later actions, we can only assume that Williams was intrigued rather than scared by what she saw.

Williams was a hard worker and she impressed her superiors so much that in 1864 she was sent to Washington, DC, to work for a rising star, General Philip Sheridan. As Williams would discover as she accompanied him on raids against the enemy, Sheridan wasn't afraid to use extreme tactics to grasp victory.

Virginia's Shenandoah Valley was the breadbasket of the Confederacy and a key transportation route. After victories at Third Winchester and Fisher's Hill, Sheridan commanded men to destroy barns, crops, mills, railroads and factories. Known locally as 'The Burning', he left over 1,036 square kilometres of the valley uninhabitable. He also seized any slaves they came across to hamper reconstruction. If Williams hadn't understood the brutality of war before, there is no doubt she did now.

When the Civil War ended in 1865, Williams was at Jefferson Barracks back in her native Missouri. After the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, she was discharged from the army and granted her freedom. However, the joy of being emancipated was quickly tempered by uncertainty over where they would live and how they would make money.

As Harriet Tubman, the African-American abolitionist (who also served openly as a woman in the Union army, as a scout), summarised it: "I

**"WILLIAMS WAS EXPOSED TO THE COST OF WAR"**

## LIVING CONTRABAND

In 1861, not long after the Civil War began, three runaway slaves presented themselves at the Union-held Fort Monroe. They had travelled from the Confederate-occupied Norfolk County with a hope to seek protection from their masters. These men were not the first African-Americans to travel to Union held areas seeking help but they were the first to be dubbed 'contraband'.

The commander, General Benjamin Butler, claimed that these slaves were property and, as the owners had declared themselves not part of the US and were enemies, the 'property' did not need to be returned. The Union took advantage of this flow of resources by putting the former-slaves to work as labourers. By September the same year the men and women began to be paid for their work.

Non-military jobs included bakers, butchers and nurses. Although it was far from freedom, many slaves saw this as an improvement and men, women and children flooded towards Union-held cities. There were so many former slaves seeking Union help that housing in the form of the 'Grand Contraband Camp' was erected and included a school, a hospital and churches.

The Union's focus, however, wasn't on integrating African-Americans but swelling their troop numbers. Thousands of former slaves enlisted in the United States Colored Troops but received less pay than their white counterparts. Black troops protested this and equal pay was finally granted in 1864. After the war ended, many of these soldiers served as 'buffalo soldiers', the first peacetime black regiments.

**40,000**  
CONTRABAND SLAVES  
TRAVELLED TO  
WASHINGTON

**10%**  
OF UNION SOLDIERS  
WERE BLACK

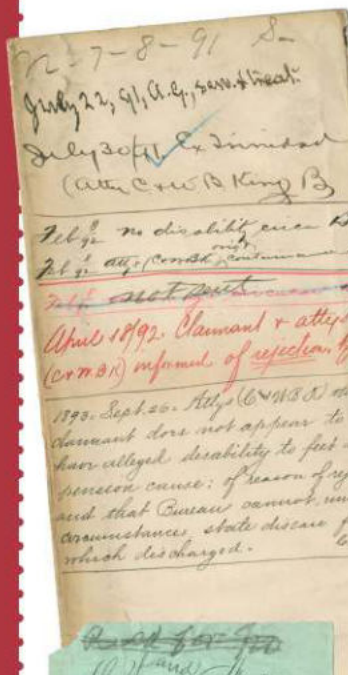


**186,000**  
THE NUMBER OF BLACK  
SOLDIERS IN THE  
UNION ARMY

**70%**  
THE PERCENTAGE  
OF SLAVES  
SOME SOUTHERN  
STATES LOST







## These US army records show Williams was denied a pension

(8-612.)

**STATISTICS.**

**REBELLION SERVICE.—INVALID.**

Age at enlistment 16 years (Excluding from  
draft law)

Service in months, 21 mos.

Age when pensioned, \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of 1st payment, \_\_\_\_\_  
to \_\_\_\_\_ 4th, 189 \_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

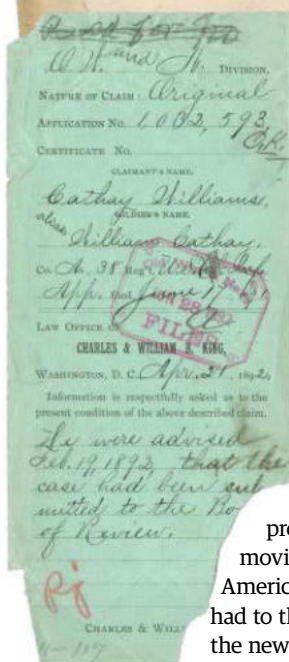
P. O. Address, Amidad, Cal.

Date of death, \_\_\_\_\_

Age at death, \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE.—This blank will be filled by the parties designated,  
giving number, service, cause of incapacitation of service,  
date of case, and cause of rejection strike and unemployment  
law, then forward slip to Finance Division; thence to A. &  
Division.

*Geo B Raum*  
Commissioner.



was free, but there was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom. I was a stranger in a strange land." Employment for African-Americans was scarce, especially in the south.

However, no sooner had one conflict finished than another begun. The army was recruiting soldiers to protect the many settlers moving west from Native American attacks. Freed slaves had to the opportunity to join the new all-black units that were created after the Civil War. The

army provided a stable source of income despite its dangers, something that was harder for recently liberated slaves to find in civilian life.

Williams certainly thought so. Not only was she accustomed to military life and what it entailed, but she had made herself self-sufficient there. She earned a wage and some recognition for her skills. The army also offered education, health care and a pension, very difficult things for recently freed slaves to obtain.

For a young, black female, the outside world was uncertain. She knew war and she knew it well. She had witnessed Negro regiments fighting during the war and when she lived in Washington it is likely she had heard stories of women disguising themselves as men to serve. Williams already had a cousin and friend who had signed up and, woman or not, she didn't intend to be left behind in civilian life. She was certainly done with washing clothes. So she made a decision – she was going to enlist.

We do not know much about Williams' personality, only that which we can assume from

her actions, and the act of a woman binding her breasts, cutting her hair and lowering her voice to serve illegally in an army took guts – even more so for a freed black woman.


Williams was already tall at 1.75 metres and she decided to switch her names round, taking on the pseudonym William Cathay. She told the recruiting officer she was a 22-year-old cook and he described her as having black eyes, black hair and a black complexion. The criteria for serving at that time wasn't harsh or strictly enforced, and after a brief medical exam she was declared fit for duty on 15 November 1866.



She was assigned to Company A of the 38th Infantry, one of four new black units created that same year. Cathay Williams the slave and washerwoman was gone, William Cathay the soldier was born.

Only Williams' cousin and friend, placed in the same regiment, knew she the secret and it's one that was no doubt difficult to keep under wraps. However, she was determined – she wanted to make her own living, not rely on friends or family to provide for her. In order to keep her secret,

Williams had to keep up with the men, many of whom had undergone military training and already won one war. However, she shot, marched and stood guard with them without the slightest hint of suspicion. After training at Jefferson Barracks, the men (and one woman) marched to Fort Riley in Kansas, then onto Fort Harker and New Mexico, over 804 kilometres away. Finally, the regiment made it to Fort Cummings, where Williams would be stationed for eight months.



In the west, pioneers travelling to California through Cooke's Canyon were being ambushed by native Americans and Williams' regiment was sent to the dangerous route to protect them. During this time, Williams was involved with ensuring miners and travelling immigrants made it through safe from Apache attack. Killings along the route were common, with hundreds of travellers losing their lives, and it even had earned the grisly name 'Massacre Canyon' due to the murders and mutilations that had occurred there. Williams may have only conducted garrison duties but her work was essential and took tremendous bravery.

However, military life did begin to take its toll and Williams was plagued by ill health throughout her career. She contracted smallpox soon after she signed up but she was determined to rejoin her unit. Perhaps pushing her body too far in the New Mexico heat and worn down by the

“FOR A YOUNG,  
BLACK FEMALE, THE  
OUTSIDE WORLD  
WAS UNCERTAIN”

**The United States Coloured Troops were nicknamed 'Buffalo Soldiers'**





## WOMEN AT WAR

Cathay Williams' story is not unique. Throughout history, women have disguised themselves to join men on the battlefield. Whether it was due to their adventurous spirits, to be a part of history, patriotism or simply the promise of reliable wages, it is estimated that 400 women hid their gender to fight during the Civil War. For these brave, trailblazing women, staying at home to wait and weep was simply not an option.

### UNION



#### Sarah Emma Edmonds

*2nd Michigan Infantry*

Resented by her father for being a woman, Edmonds created an entirely new persona not just for war, but for life — Franklin Thompson. She took part in the Siege of Yorktown in 1781 and possibly even conducted espionage missions behind enemy lines. Edmonds also acted as a mail carrier, traversing hundreds of miles across perilous territory.



#### Jennie Hodgers

*95th Illinois Infantry*

Not much is known of Hodgers' life before she became Albert Cashier and enlisted to the army during the Civil War. He served for three years, took part in 40 engagements and even escaped capture by overpowering a guard. After the war ended, Hodgers continued to live as a man, with even his tombstone bearing only his male name until a second was added in 1970.



#### Frances Clayton

*4th Missouri Artillery*

Inspired by love and devotion, Clayton disguised herself and enlisted alongside her husband during the Civil War. Serving in both cavalry and artillery units, Clayton was wounded twice during the war. When her husband was killed during the Battle of Stones River in 1862-63, she continued to fight — reportedly stepping over his body to do so.



### CONFEDERACY



#### Loreta Janeta Velazquez

*Independent Soldier*

Born to a wealthy Cuban family, Velazquez eloped with a Texan soldier at the age of 14. When the Civil War broke out, she ignored her husband's protests and disguised herself as a man — Harry T Buford. She single-handedly raised a regiment of volunteers to prove her ability. She went on to fight as an independent soldier as well as conducting espionage as a member of the detective corps.



#### Malinda Blalock

*26th North Carolina Regiment*

Blalock was another woman inspired by her devotion to her husband. Although she initially sided with the Confederates, he was a staunch Unionist and planned to join the Confederacy to escape across the frontier. Blalock decided to disguise herself and go with her him — however, this was not as simple as expected. They faced the grisly reality of military life before they switched sides.



#### Mary and Molly Bell

*36th Virginia Infantry*

Resented Mary and Molly were cousins who grew up together in the mountains of Southwest Virginia where they learned to hunt and ride horses. Disguised as men, the two women were so bold on the battlefield they were promoted to sergeant and corporal. During one skirmish, Molly signalled an alarm and killed three Union soldiers armed with just a muzzleloader.



incessant marching, Williams was recorded as being admitted to four different hospitals on five different occasions. Incredibly, despite her multiple medical maladies, Williams' true sex was never discovered during these visits.

This luck could only last so long. After two years of military service, she fell ill again and this time an army surgeon discovered she was a woman. It is likely Williams pleaded with him to keep the secret, as she may have done before, but he immediately informed her commanding officer and the truth was finally revealed.

The news swept around the regiment in no time and, despite the fact she had served alongside them for two years, all of the men wanted her out. Some of them even got angry at Williams herself. The commanding officer wasted no time in giving her a disability discharge, eager to get rid of her as soon as possible.

The officer, Captain Charles E Clarke stated that she was "feeble both physically and mentally, and much of the time unfit for duty", while the surgeon added that she had "a feeble habit. He is continually on sick report without benefit. He is unable to do military duty... This condition dates prior to enlistment." On 14 October 1868, Williams was forced out of the military clutching nothing more than a certificate of disability.

Williams was clearly not liked by her commanding officer but she had made history as being the first black woman to serve in the United States Army. However, outside in the civilian

world, this meant very little. She found work as a cook in Fort Union, New Mexico, then eventually moved to Pueblo, Colorado. During this time she married but the relationship ended in disaster when her spouse stole all her money and horses. Williams eventually had the man arrested and did not marry again.

Despite her string of bad luck, Williams was determined to make her own money; she didn't want to be a burden on friends or family. She moved to Trinidad, Colorado, and utilised the skills she had developed over the years, fulfilling odd jobs as a cook, laundress and seamstress, using her 'good sewing machine' to support herself and refusing to ask for handouts.

It was during this period that Williams attracted the attention of a reporter from St Louis. Rumours had been flying about a black woman who disguised herself to serve in the US Army and when he finally tracked her down, he travelled all the way to Colorado to interview her. Williams, likely feeling she had nothing left to lose, told him about her life and military service. An article was published in the *St Louis Daily Times* on 2 January 1876, it is thanks to this that we now know many of the details of Williams' life that may have been otherwise lost to history.

Although Williams was determined to support herself, eventually her bad health caught up with her. She suffered from neuralgia (a term for many illnesses) and diabetes. The latter had forced her to have several toes amputated and she needed

a crutch to walk. As she aged, she also suffered from deafness and rheumatism, and by the age of 47 she finally gave in and applied for a disability pension on account of her military service.

Although obviously as a woman she had broken laws by serving in the military, many other women who had done the same thing before her had applied and been successful. However, after being examined, the doctor rejected her claim and any type of pension was denied despite her years of service.

The brutal reality of the situation was that although other women had received an army pension, they were all like Deborah Sampson — a white woman with influential friends in the right places. As throughout her entire life, Williams had nobody but herself to fight for her.

From this point on, Williams disappears from history. We can only assume that penniless, ailing and unable to provide for herself, she soon succumbed to her illnesses. We know that she is not listed in the 1900 census and it is likely she died soon after being denied her pension at the age of about 50.

Unable to afford a stone plaque, her grave would have been marked by wood, which faded and deteriorated long ago, and thus her final resting place to this day is a mystery. However, in 2013 a bronze bust of Williams was unveiled in Leavenworth, Kansas, and her trailblazing spirit as the first African-American woman to serve in the US military is finally beginning to be recognised.





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## Missile-firing troops

Crossbowmen whose bolts could penetrate armour formed the bulk of missile troops in the Hussite army at Vitkov Hill, although there may have been small numbers of men with primitive firearms. The ratio of crossbowmen to hand gunners was approximately four to one.

## Hilltop fort

Žižka ordered his troops to construct a fortification that stretched across the crest of Vitkov Hill. The bulwark, which was erected 800 metres east of the outer walls of Prague, consisted of a tall palisade behind a ditch with a wooden tower anchoring both ends.

## Poised for counterattack

The walled city of Prague was firmly in the hands of Žižka's peasant army, which had bottled up the Catholic garrisons loyal to Sigismund in Hradčany and Vyšehrad castles. A large force of Hussites assembled behind Porici Gate, which was situated near the river, in preparation for a possible counterattack against the Crusaders.

## Bloody melee

Contrary to this romantic depiction, the Crusader knights in the front ranks dismounted to attack the palisade on foot. Their unattended horses severely impeded the deployment of the rear ranks. The hand-to-hand fighting at the palisade was fierce and bloody.





# BATTLE OF VÍTKOV HILL

PRAGUE, BOHEMIA, 14 JULY 1420

Written by William E. Welsh

**W**hen Jan Hus was burned at the stake for heresy on 6 July 1415, it sparked a revolution. Killed a century before Martin Luther famously sought to reform the Church, Hus blazed a trail. He encouraged reading the Bible in Czech rather than Latin, condemned the issuing of indulgences to the wealthy, and denied the infallibility of the pope.

As a priest in Prague and dean at the university, Hus amassed many followers in Bohemia, known as Hussites, who were furious at his execution. The coming years would see them openly dissent, sometimes resulting in violence. This boiled over in 1419, when a mob killed several councillors after the city refused to release some Hussite prisoners.

Legend has it that the shock of these murders killed the king of Bohemia, Wenceslaus IV, and it was this that turned the revolt into a war. His heir was his brother, Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund, but the Bohemians distrusted him, believing he had betrayed Hus. When the Council of Constance had ordered Hus to appear before them in 1414, Sigismund had guaranteed him safe passage to and from the ecumenical council. The clergy ignoring this wasn't strictly the emperor's fault but it was enough to persuade the Bohemians to take up arms against him. The Hussite Wars began.

Pope Martin V came to Sigismund's aid by issuing a papal bull in March 1420 calling for a crusade against the Hussites. The Hussites formed their own army, choosing the former head of Wenceslaus' palace guard, Jan Žižka, to lead them. He gathered an army of 9,000 in Prague in May. The city had

many strategic advances – as well as being walled, it was on top of a hill and surrounded by a river. His troops set about strengthening their defences.

Sigismund arrived in June with 80,000 Crusaders. His troops held Hradčany Castle and the Lesser Town on the left bank of the Vltava River and Vyšehrad Castle on the right. They camped on high ground across the river from the Hussites. Sigismund controlled all approaches except the east across Vítkov Hill. Žižka set his troops to work building a fort made from dirt and timber atop the hill.

Rather than assail the formidable defences of the town, Sigismund decided to lay siege to it and starve the defenders out. For this to work, though, the Crusaders needed to capture Vítkov Hill, which controlled the eastern approach to the city. The emperor's plan involved diversionary attacks to draw troops from the hill. Meanwhile, 8,000 armoured cavalry would attack from the east.

Žižka was too clever to be baited and the diversionary forces were too weak to do much harm. The top of the hill was only 91.5 metres wide and the Crusaders couldn't bring the full weight of their numbers to bear against the Hussites' strong position. When the attack stalled, Žižka sent a troop up the south slope to fall on the enemy's left flank. Soon the attackers were retreating.

Since the garrison of Hradčany Castle remained firmly in control of Sigismund's forces throughout the siege, the Czech Catholic nobility persuaded him to proceed with his coronation. On 28 July, he was crowned king of Bohemia in Saint Vitus Cathedral but most of his army had gone home.





## Crusaders

**INFANTRY:** 44,000  
**CAVALRY:** 34,000  
**BOMBARDS:** 100



## HOLY ROMAN EMPEROR SIGISMUND

### LEADER

Pope Martin V's papal bull of 17 March 1420 against the Hussites gave Sigismund a large army of zealous Crusaders.

**Strengths:** Although he had extensive experience commanding armies in Eastern Europe, he had a chequered record as a commander.

**Weaknesses:** Failed to issue effective instructions for the attack.

## CRUSADER KNIGHTS

### KEY UNIT

Heavily armoured, confident, professional soldiers who were proficient with a wide variety of weapons.

**Strengths:** Mounted knights almost always defeated infantry in open field combat.

**Weaknesses:** Their arrogance and overconfidence made them vulnerable to defeat by fanatical foes.



## KNIGHT'S SWORD

### KEY WEAPON

A sidearm between 71 and 101 centimetres that was evolving away from cutting and slashing towards thrusting and piercing.

**Strengths:** Long, narrow swords were well suited for piercing armour.

**Weaknesses:** Useless against Hussite hand gunners or crossbowmen in protected positions.

## 01 Sturdy palisade

Hussite leader Jan Žižka deploys his 9,000 Hussite troops in three divisions. The first occupied the palisade atop the hill; the second, under Žižka, deployed behind Vítkov Hill to serve as a ready reserve to reinforce the hilltop palisade as needed; and a third, under Utraquist priest Jan Želivský, took up a position behind Poříčí Gate in the New Town next to the west end of Sickhouse Field.

## 02 Crusader bombardment fails

Sigismund tries to bring a converging fire against the Hussite bulwark atop Vítkov Hill with bombard batteries deployed on the left bank of the river and on Sickhouse Field. Since the bombards on the opposite bank of the river are forced to fire at maximum limit of their range, they inflict only minor damage. Meanwhile, a Hussite sortie from the city forces the withdrawal of the bombards on Sickhouse Field.

## 03 Diversionary attacks

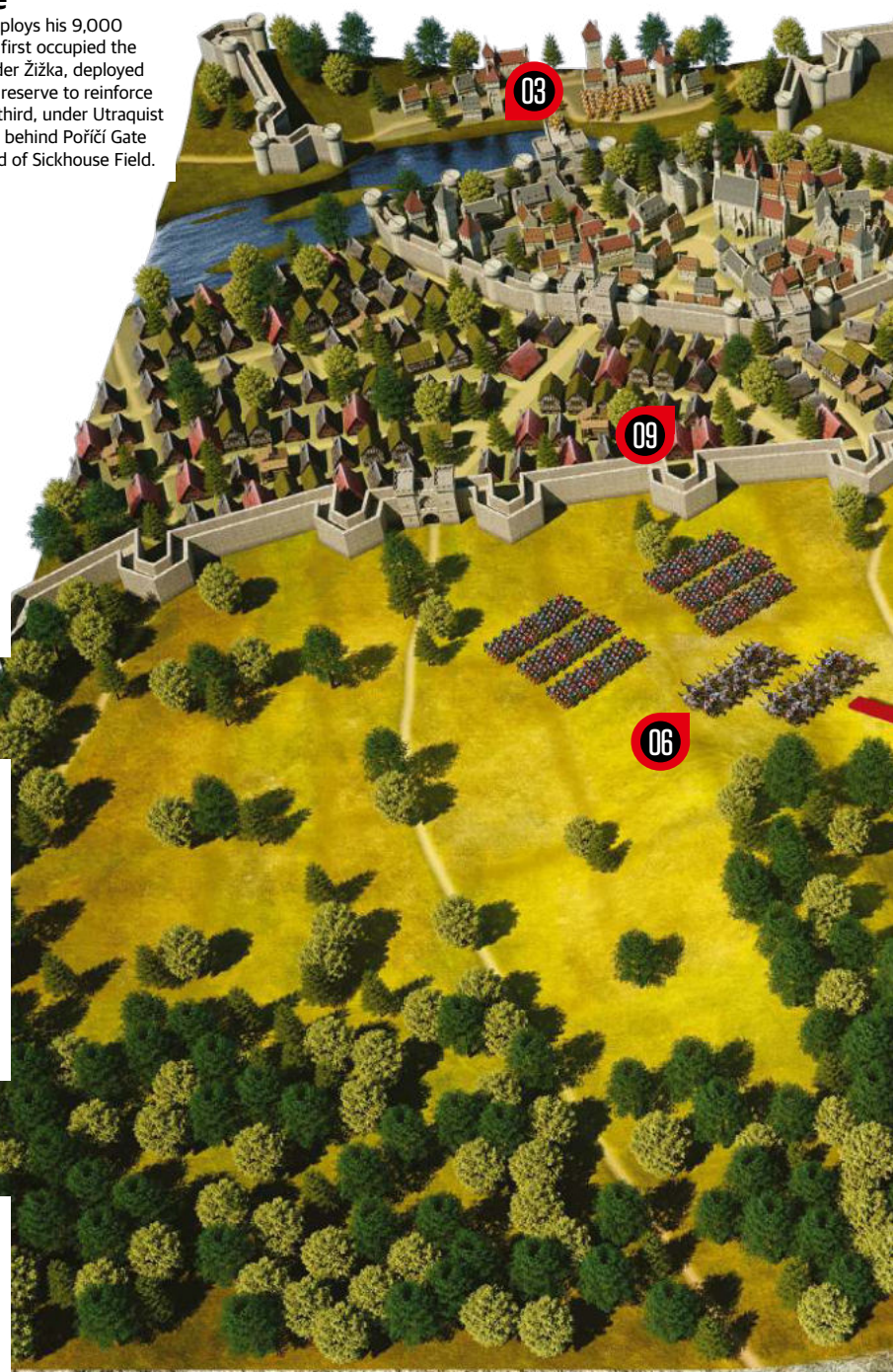
Sigismund orders the royal garrisons at Hradčany and Vyšehrad castles to conduct sorties against Hussite militia forces within the city in order to divert the attention of the Hussites from the main attack to follow shortly against Vítkov Hill. The attacks neither distract Žižka from his intended deployments nor do they result in the dispatch of troops away from Vítkov Hill and its environs.

## 04 Heavy cavalry rides forth

Count Henry of Isenburg leads 8,000 cavalry from the Crusader camp at Bubny across the Vltava River. They form up for an attack up the east slope of the hill.

## 05 Desperate assault

Isenburg's cavalry dismounts and attacks the Hussite palisade on foot. With a front only 914 metres wide, the Crusaders have a difficult time bringing their superior numbers to bear against the bulwark. The Hussites holding the bulwark fight with a grim determination to hold the position because if it collapses the city would be completely surrounded. After hard fighting, the Crusaders capture most of the palisade and one of the palisade's two forts.







## Hussites

**INFANTRY:** 7,200  
**CAVALRY:** 1,800  
**BOMBARDS:** 0



### JAN ŽIŽKA

#### LEADER

A tactical visionary who forged a formidable peasant army and developed innovative defensive tactics that enabled it to vanquish superior forces.

**Strengths:** His courage inspired his troops to Herculean feats.

**Weaknesses:** Although indispensable, he routinely risked his life in battle.



### HUSSITE INFANTRY

#### KEY UNIT

They used handguns, crossbows and pole weapons to blunt the force of a cavalry attack.

**Strengths:** Fought to the death knowing they would be executed if captured.

**Weaknesses:** Spearmen had upper body armour but peasant militia only had gambesons.



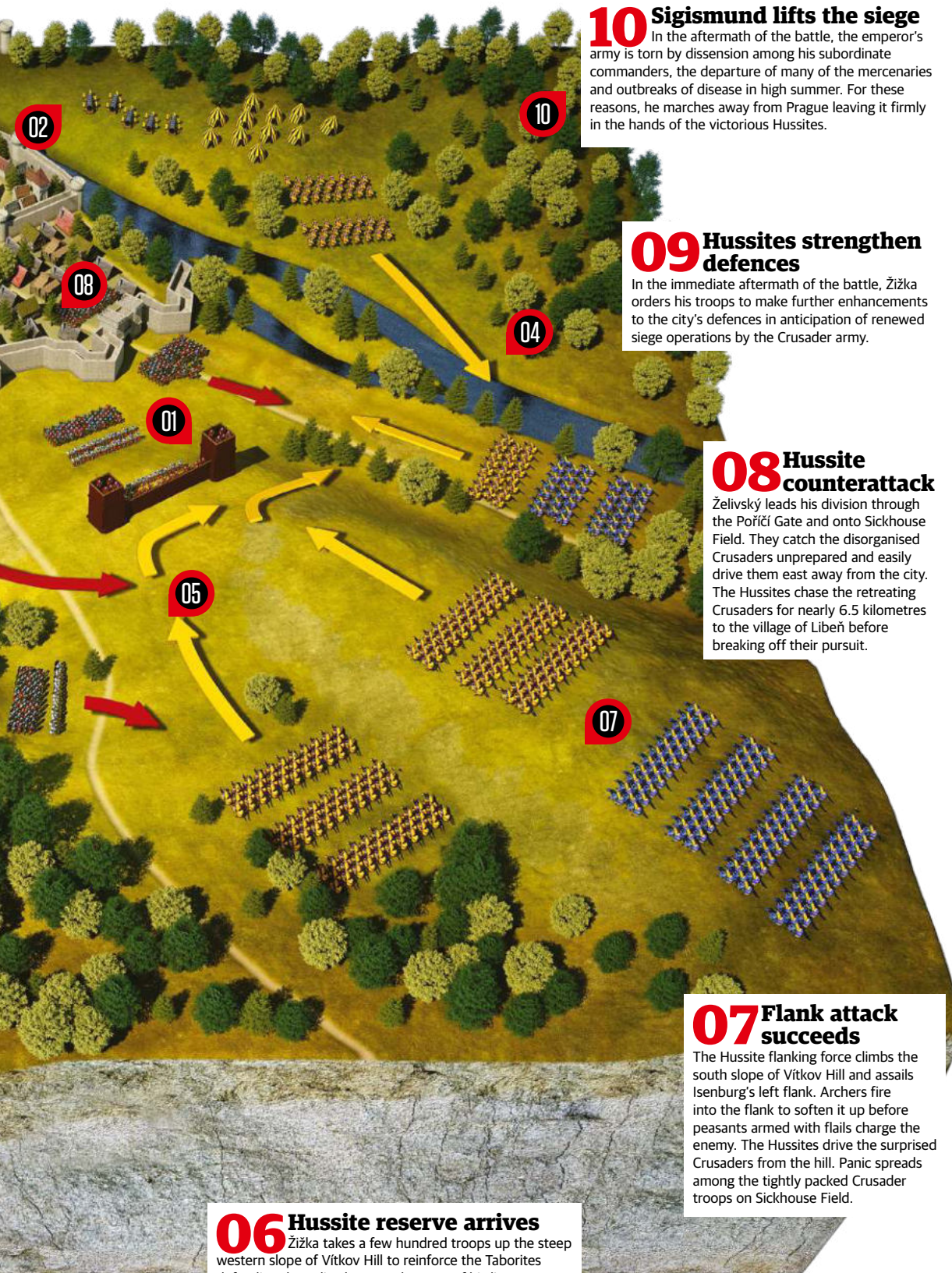
### FLAIL

#### KEY WEAPON

Peasant militia modified farm threshing flails by adding spikes to them in order to batter their armour-clad opponents.

**Strengths:** When swung with force, the spikes embedded in the wooden head could puncture armour.

**Weaknesses:** Required considerable physical stamina to wield throughout a long battle.



### 10 Sigismund lifts the siege

In the aftermath of the battle, the emperor's army is torn by dissension among his subordinate commanders, the departure of many of the mercenaries and outbreaks of disease in high summer. For these reasons, he marches away from Prague leaving it firmly in the hands of the victorious Hussites.

### 09 Hussites strengthen defences

In the immediate aftermath of the battle, Žižka orders his troops to make further enhancements to the city's defences in anticipation of renewed siege operations by the Crusader army.

### 08 Hussite counterattack

Želivský leads his division through the Poříčí Gate and onto Sickhouse Field. They catch the disorganised Crusaders unprepared and easily drive them east away from the city. The Hussites chase the retreating Crusaders for nearly 6.5 kilometres to the village of Libeň before breaking off their pursuit.

### 07 Flank attack succeeds

The Hussite flanking force climbs the south slope of Vítkov Hill and assails Isenburg's left flank. Archers fire into the flank to soften it up before peasants armed with flails charge the enemy. The Hussites drive the surprised Crusaders from the hill. Panic spreads among the tightly packed Crusader troops on Sickhouse Field.

### 06 Hussite reserve arrives

Žižka takes a few hundred troops up the steep western slope of Vítkov Hill to reinforce the Taborites defending the palisade. He orders one of his lieutenants to lead the majority of the reserve division on a flank march to launch a surprise attack on Isenburg's left flank.





# HEAVY IS THE HEAD

Royal biographer Robert Lacey reveals the truth behind the Queen's depiction, the royal scandals and marital strife in hit drama *The Crown*

Interview by Dom Reeseigh-Lincoln and Jessica Leggett

**W**hile royal period dramas are commonplace, few have attempted to depict the life of a reigning monarch. But this is exactly what hit Netflix drama *The Crown* does, portraying the early years of Queen Elizabeth II following her ascent to the British throne.

Set from 1947 to 1955, *The Crown's* first season tackled some of the most influential moments in the young queen's life, from the untimely death of her father, George VI, to the public scandal of her sister's love affair. It also touches on other key events like Winston Churchill's re-election, Cold War tensions and even the Great Smog of London.

The show has always courted controversy (and critical acclaim) because it doesn't shy away from the Queen's relationship with Prince Philip, played by Claire Foy and Matt Smith, respectively. This ranges from their early passion to the strains the monarchy has put on their marriage as Elizabeth is forced to make tough choices and Philip becomes sidelined.

*The Crown* has been created by Peter Morgan, who also wrote the Oscar-winning movie *The Queen*. The show has been given a similar Hollywood treatment, with a rumoured £100 million spent on its lavish production design and costumes. But how much dramatic license has been taken with facts to ensure its as gripping as you average blockbuster?

On the eve of the *The Crown* launching on DVD and Blu-ray, we ask Robert Lacey, one of the Queen's official biographers and a

consultant on the show, about its accuracy and what we can look forward to in season two. (Warning: spoilers ahead!)

## How did you become involved with *The Crown*?

In 1977, I wrote a book called *Majesty* that looked at the role of the monarchy in the political system and the national imagination. After Diana's death, the royal family had their greatest crisis of all and I interviewed a number of people who were at Buckingham Palace and Balmoral at the time.

Because of my research, Peter Morgan asked me to help with his first film, *The Queen*, and since then we've worked on *The Audience* together. He then asked me to get involved in helping with the historical accuracy of his new show, *The Crown*.

As a historical consultant, I'm involved with the words in the scripts, which is really interesting – especially as there are two dramatic centres in the series. Although it starts with a royal date, 1947, it finishes with the retirement of Winston Churchill in 1955 with a mixture of royal and political in between. I should stress that there is a huge research team working behind the scenes, not just me, and they all do a wonderful job.

## While it's very much based on a real story, do you feel the show has taken creative licence with the royals?

Well, you'd expect me to say that, but the way I try and describe it is that every single incident

you see is based on very thorough historical research. While there are moments when drama departs from dry history and imagines what someone would have done in these situations, there are wonderful, obscure facts that a lot of people couldn't believe when they saw the show. For example, there really was a pet raven hopping around while Elizabeth was having her constitutional history lessons.

I interviewed people who had been taught by Doctor Marten [Elizabeth's private tutor as a child, seen in flashbacks] and they remember him feeding this raven sugar lumps, so it's a mixture of very thorough research to create details like that you wouldn't quite think true. On the other hand, when it comes to something like the Great Smog of London, Churchill's secretary who died in the smog is an invention – but she's based on all of the secretaries who ever worked for Churchill. The thing about drama is that it gives that leap of imagination that transports you to being there.

## How true to life is the show's portrayal of Philip and Elizabeth's relationship?

One of the things I really like about the show is the way in which it depicts the marriage as a love match. The fact that Elizabeth did have to fight back against her family who were very uncertain about this prickly, European prince – who, of course gave up his title for the first ten years of the reign. It's something that Elizabeth has never shied away from.

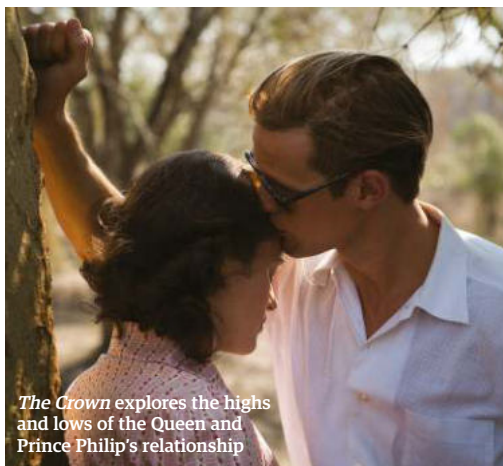
Her father's official biography says that this is the man that she has been in love with since



“THERE ARE  
WONDERFUL,  
OBSCURE  
FACTS”

Claire Foy has won  
numerous awards for  
her performance





The Crown explores the highs and lows of the Queen and Prince Philip's relationship



Depicting Elizabeth's close relationship with her father was a clear goal for The Crown

their first meeting when she was 13. Those words could only have been written with her approval, so we know he was right for her from the beginning.

It's fascinating how *The Crown* shows how Elizabeth came to the throne as a Mountbatten. When she married Philip in 1947, the topic of her surname was of great importance. They looked in the House of Windsor Act but nothing was mentioned about a surname, so she came to the throne as Elizabeth Mountbatten.

We even see a true depiction of the moment Lord Mountbatten lifts a glass and says, "House Mountbatten rules." It was only a few weeks after that it was decided she should be called Windsor. Again, it's one of those obscure details but it's absolutely true and it brings out the drama between this young married couple.

## **The Crown shows how close Elizabeth was to her father, George VI. How did this relationship help shape her?**

Elizabeth was incredibly close to her father and took such inspiration from him. She did, after all, give up the idea of having a large family after her first two children and didn't resume for another ten years. It really shows her sense of duty and priorities as a princess and a queen-in-waiting.

## "IT'S EQUALLY ABOUT THE POLITICS TAKING PLACE IN DOWNING STREET"

*The Crown* really captures that clash between personal connection and duty. One of the key reasons that the Queen has maintained her legacy for so many decades has been her sense of duty – but that has been at the cost of her family. We see her emotional life being stunted by not being able to say the first things that come to her heart. She always has to ponder everything. As the show goes on, we're going to see the personal penalties she and the royal family have to pay for having to live a life of duty.

## **How big a scandal was Princess Margaret's affair with Peter Townsend in real life?**

*The Crown* really does bring out the hypocrisy of the government's attitude at the time with the subject of Townsend wanting to divorce his wife for Margaret. The prime minister at the time, Anthony

Eden, was a divorced man but that didn't prevent him from fulfilling his role and blockading the union. In a later season of *The Crown*, we're going to see the legacy of this situation with the rise of Harold Wilson and the changes he makes to divorce laws – something that Margaret and her future husband, Antony Armstrong-Jones, take advantage of in 1960.

I think the show does a wonderful job of showing how the Queen is torn between the love for her sister – wanting to give Margaret what she wants so badly and giving her compensation for being the sibling of a monarch – but is ultimately prevented by the politicians. What really happened was that Eden and the Cabinet said that after the age of 25, Margaret was free to marry Townsend if she so wished, but there would be no pension or financial support. It was an incredibly tense situation for all involved.

## SECRET SCANDALS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY

Uncover five scandals that stayed out of the British press – at least for a time...



### **King Edward VIII in crown crisis**

Edward VIII caused a constitutional crisis when he abdicated to marry American divorcée Wallis Simpson. Their relationship had been widely reported in America and Europe but the British press chose to ignore it. They hid the extent of the affair until 1936, when it became clear that the king would rather give up his crown than his mistress.



### **Edward VIII's murderous mistress**

One of the most successful cover-ups of the 1920s revolved around Edward and his first mistress, Maggie Alibert. Having murdered her husband, Maggie's trial was all over the papers but her affair with Edward was kept under wraps. She also used sordid letters from Edward to blackmail her way to freedom and was acquitted of all charges.





Princess Margaret's affair with Peter Townsend features prominently in the series

## How does Winston Churchill's return to power fit into the story?

There was a great deal of sentimentality on Churchill's part of this beautiful young queen, of this second Elizabethan age and of that fact he couldn't quite believe he was back in power after his first tenure as prime minister in 1940-45. I think one of the strengths of the series is that it's set in two places. A lot of the story takes place in Buckingham Palace but it's equally about the politics taking place in Downing Street.

I think the drama and the appeal of the show is as much the political side of it as the one involving the royals. It gives a way to not just enjoy seeing great characters, such as Churchill, but also the big events to come, like Britain's role in the world, the changing economy and beyond. We worked very hard to ensure these social changes were all accurately reflected in *The Crown*.

## Do you know if the Queen or other members of the royal family have seen the show?

I don't believe the Queen herself would be concerned with watching something like *The Crown*, but we do know that some people close to her have seen it and, as far as we're aware, have enjoyed and liked it. Sadly, that can't be taken as any sort of royal approval.

The official Palace line on the series is that it's a work of 'fiction' and it's not going to comment on anything that's deemed as such, but I think that's just bucking the issue, really. It is certainly fiction in the sense that it's a TV drama, but it is still based on a real history and we're very proud of how accurate we've been with the facts. Part of the show's appeal is that we've stayed true to the actual events and that's made *The Crown* so popular and such a success.



Through flashbacks, we get to see the fallout of the abdication crisis

## What can viewers look forward to seeing in seasons two and three?

The new series, released this winter, covers 1955 to 1964, which was the fall of the Conservative government and the arrival of New Labour and Harold Wilson. We take a look at the politics that will, of course, reflect the changes in British society and the royal family.

In season three, which we're planning now, we're going to explore how Wilson's tenure saw the end of censorship, the legalisation of homosexuality, the reforms of divorce laws, the building of tower blocks and comprehensive education. All of this is getting woven into the narrative, along with espionage and the Cold War. At the same time, you've got the issues of monarchy running alongside it all.

*The Crown: Season One* is available on Blu-ray, DVD and Platinum Edition Blu-ray and DVD from 16 October, courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment.

*The Crown: The Inside History*, written by Robert Lacey and published by Blink Publishing, is on sale from 5 October, RRP £20.



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## The tragic tale of Prince John

The youngest child of King George V and Queen Mary, Prince John, was kept hidden from the public for most of his life. He suffered from epilepsy, which most likely contributed to his severe learning disabilities. He was moved away to Sandringham House with only a governess for company and died from a severe seizure in 1919, aged just 13.



## Princess Margaret and the bank job

The 2008 film *The Bank Job* suggests that a 1971 raid on a London bank was actually a secret service cover-up to secure lurid photos of Princess Margaret. The alleged scandal is hotly contested, though the government did mysteriously impose a gagging order, a D-notice, to prevent any news coverage of the robbery.



## The Queen's drug-addicted uncle

George, Duke of Kent, descended into drug addiction under the influence of one of his lovers, Kiki Preston. His hedonistic lifestyle was covered up, even after his tragic death in a plane crash in 1942 at the age of 39. It was not until a 2003 documentary, *The Queen's Lost Uncle*, that George was brought to mainstream attention.



# WIN AN ENGLISH HERITAGE FAMILY PASS



**Get a special edition of *The Crown*, plus a year-long pass to explore real-life royal landmarks**

To mark season one of *The Crown* being released on Blu-ray and DVD this month, we have a prize fit for a queen. This includes an English Heritage Family Pass, *The Crown: Season One – The Platinum Edition* and a copy of Robert Lacey's book *The Crown: The Inside Story*.

The English Heritage Family Pass covers one adult and six children, giving you unlimited access to over 400 historic places, including Stonehenge and Dover Castle. Membership will also give you free or reduced price entry to hundreds of exciting events.

Along with the first series of *The Crown*, the box set also includes a newspaper article from 2 June 1953, the day of Elizabeth's coronation, plus an exclusive nickel-plated collector's coin with its own display case, an art card of the House of Windsor's family tree and an enticing sample of *The Crown: The Inside Story*.

If this isn't enough, we also have a complete copy of Lacey's companion guide to give away, which separates fact and fiction for viewers who want to know the real history of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

One winner will take home all of these prizes, while three runners up will each receive *The Crown: Season One* on DVD or Blu-ray and *The Crown: The Inside Story*.

For your chance to win,  
answer the  
following question:

**In what year was Queen Elizabeth II's coronation?**

**A. 1942**

**B. 1953**

**C. 1964**

Enter today at

**[historyanswers.co.uk](http://historyanswers.co.uk)**

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# REVIEWS

All About History on the books, TV shows and  
films causing a stir in the history world

## PICTURING THE APOCALYPSE

Considering the end of days  
in 2,000 years of art

**Authors** Natasha O'Hear and Anthony O'Hear **Publisher** Oxford University Press

**Price** £12.99 **Released** Out now

Ever since John of Patmos wrote down the series of visions that would ultimately come to be known as the Book of Revelation, the end of the world has been a recurring motif in the public consciousness.

Even now, almost every superhero movie involves a plot to destroy or irrevocably change the world as we know it, and programmes like *The Walking Dead* explore the moral and physical challenges of surviving in a world where all the trappings of society have evaporated. And is it any surprise that we have Armageddon on our mind when climate change and constant political tensions make the end of days seem ever closer?

Father and daughter author duo Natasha and Anthony O'Hear have a special insight into this apocalyptic text and its cultural impact. Anthony is professor of philosophy at the University of Buckingham while Natasha is an art historian and lecturer in theology, imagination and the arts at the University of St Andrews with a speciality in Biblical artistic interpretations.

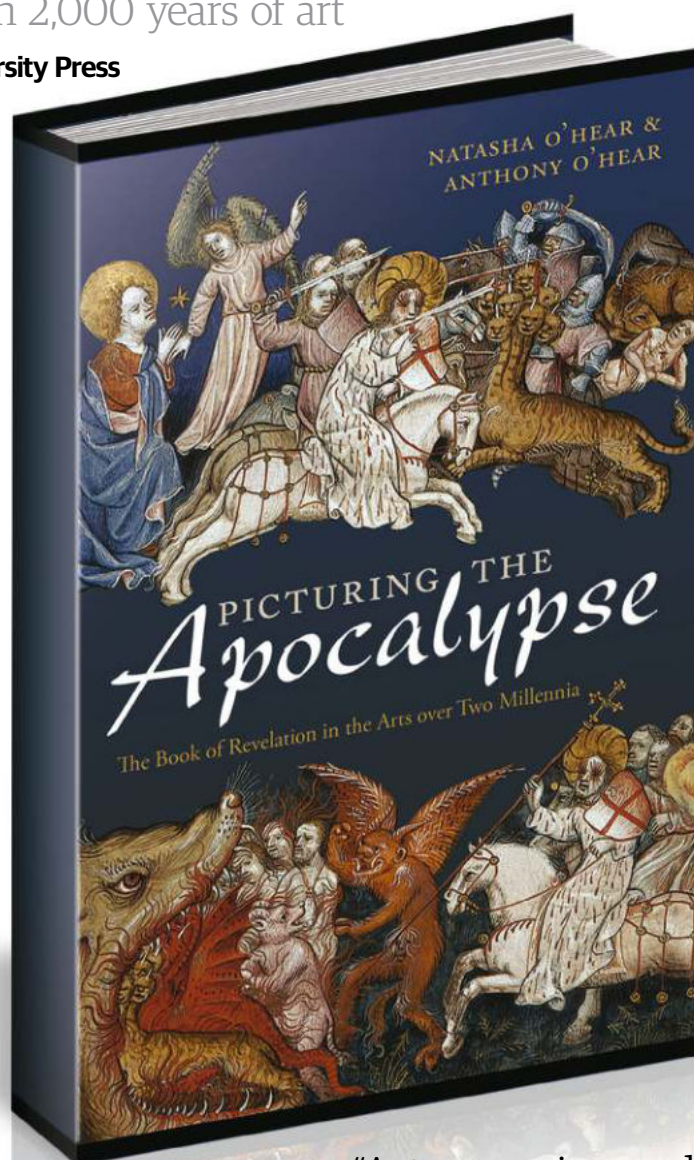
*Picturing The Apocalypse* examines the symbols that appear in the Book of Revelation, such as the Seven Seals, the Whore of Babylon and the Beasts. It considers their status as recurring motifs in works of literature, art, music and other media throughout history. Sometimes they are treated as the subjects of a veritable 'fire and brimstone' prophecy to be ignored at our peril, but just as often artists perceive and interpret Revelation through the filter of allegory, the same as any myth or legend of antiquity.

Artists given the deep dive treatment in *Picturing The Apocalypse* include Hieronymus Bosch, Albrecht Dürer and Max Beckmann. One of the most famous creators examined is William Blake, whose varying depictions of the Great Red Dragon have taken on their own cultural significance, and in turn inspired the novelist Thomas Harris when writing *Red Dragon*, the first book to feature that other great monster of the 20th century, Hannibal Lecter. The book also includes glossy images of many of the artists' nightmarish visions.

While ostensibly an academic tome, *Picturing The Apocalypse* is highly accessible for the casual reader who isn't au fait with the ins and outs of the Book of Revelation. It is certainly just as interested in the text's influence on popular culture as it is in Medieval and Renaissance art – in fact, the very first page of the introduction name-checks *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

One of the more illuminating chapters explores the ubiquity of apocalyptic imagery in 20th and 21st century works, from Ingmar Bergman's seminal film *The Seventh Seal* to songs like 'When The Man Comes Around' by Johnny Cash, as well as covering all manner of video games and comic books.

Ultimately, the O'Hears are less interested in how these works of art literally interpret the text itself than with the ways in which they reiterate and rearrange the imagery of Revelation as symbols of adversity, suffering and hope – and in turn, what these works have to say about humanity.



"Arts perceive and interpret Revelation through the filter of allegory"



# THE TEMPLARS:

## THE RISE AND FALL OF GOD'S HOLY WARRIORS

Dan Jones strips back the myth on the legendary band of crusaders

**Author** Dan Jones **Publisher** Head of Zeus **Price** £25 **Released** Out now

The Knights Templar have for years fired the imagination of authors and historians alike. From their humble beginnings as guardians of Christian pilgrims, the order grew into a financial and military giant – the special forces of the Medieval world and an organisation that could bankroll kings. Their secretive initiation rituals and ability to project power of great distances have seen them cast in popular imagination as historical bogeymen and villains.

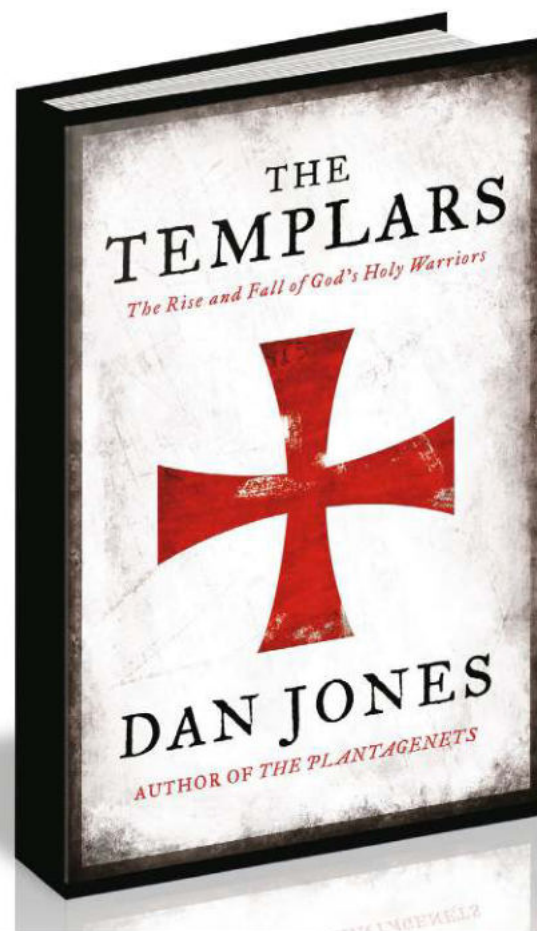
We know them as the antagonists in Dan Brown's thrillers and the *Assassin's Creed* franchises, but as Dan Jones shows, their real deeds are no less engaging and spectacular.

Fans of Jones' earlier works like *The Hollow Crown* and *The Plantagenets* will be pleased to know he has kept his exciting, page-turning writing. The story of the organisation is split into four sections: Pilgrims, Soldiers, Bankers and

Heretics – although there is a surprising amount of crossover between them that keeps the pace up and stops the story flagging. Another change from his earlier works is that much of the story revolves around the Holy Land and is a welcome departure from his more Britain-focused books in the past.

The book is also particularly relevant today with the downfall of the Templars, masterminded by Philip IV, who was heavily in debt to the order, having modern parallels. As well as the trumped-up charges levelled against them reading like the Medieval equivalent of 'fake news', the conflicts of faith and systematic attacks on the Templar's character and assets are similar to headlines that dominate the newsstands today.

In all, Jones has created a fresh and nuanced chronicle of the Knights Templar, filled with excitement, blood and wit in his trademark style. It is definitely a must-have for any fan of the Middle Ages.



# THE EXCEPTION

A story of forbidden love gives a glimpse of the last German kaiser's final days

**Certificate** 15 **Director** David Leveaux **Cast** Lily James, Jai Courtney, Janet McTeer, Christopher Plummer, Eddie Marsan **Released** Out now

One of the less covered aspects of the Third Reich is the fate of former Kaiser Wilhelm II during his life and eventual death in exile after his forced abdication.

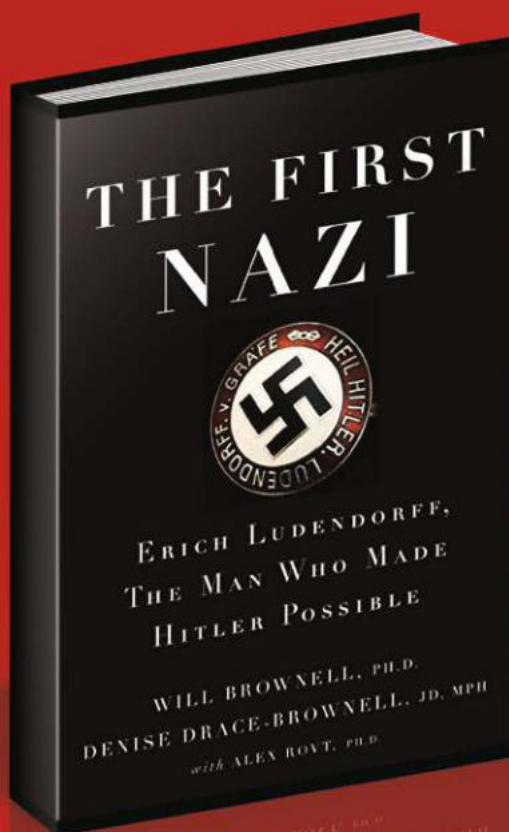
In *The Exception*, which is based on Alan Judd's novel *The Kaiser's Last Kiss*, a valiant attempt is made to rectify this. Both the novel and the film create a fictional account of a Reich officer sent to guard the ex-kaiser and collect intelligence on him. It was no secret that Wilhelm had never given up on his hope to eventually be restored to the German throne, and the story imagines a world where that was still a genuine, if remote, possibility.

In the role of the famously volatile Wilhelm, Christopher Plummer gives a truly empathetic account of a proud man who is clinging to his dignity, even

when his honour and reputation are reduced to shadows of what they once were. Lily James and Jai Courtney play the fictional characters of Jewish Dutch maid Mieke de Jong, and Captain Brandt, respectively, and both paint convincing portraits of forbidden lovers, drawn into the high-stakes political game of Wilhelm's possible restoration, each from opposite sides.

The film's storyline cannot be taken as historical fact in almost any way, of course, apart from the very basic facts that Wilhelm did indeed live in Doorn, the Netherlands, and died before ever seeing the Fatherland again. *The Exception* streamlines the events of the novel, but does in favour of a more intimate character portrait of Wilhelm (wrapped inside a generic love story), and in that regard, it's a definite success.





## THE FIRST NAZI: ERICH LUDENDORFF, THE MAN WHO MADE HITLER POSSIBLE

An ambitious exploration of Ludendorff's impact

**Authors** Will Brownell, Denise Drace-Brownell and Alex Rovt

**Publisher** Duckworth Overlook **Price** £10.99 **Released** Out now

**B**roadly speaking, *The First Nazi* is a biography of Erich Ludendorff, chief of staff and quartermaster general of the Imperial German Army during World War I. But it also attempts to address his later life when he became embroiled with right-wing coups and Hitler's Nazi Party.

*The First Nazi* details his experiences and influences in World War I. Despite the title, three quarters of the book deals with his wartime actions while his post-war activities and Nazi Party links are relegated to just three chapters. Considering the title and its intent to show how Ludendorff "made Hitler possible", this feels somewhat lacking in evidence.

Despite this, it is an interesting read and makes a bold hypothesis, suggesting

that Ludendorff may have been the most destructive man of the 20th century, liable for not only the myth that Germany had been betrayed by the Jews but also for the rise of communism and the success of the Nazi Party.

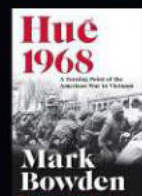
Interestingly, the book hardly mentions Ludendorff's actual interactions with Hitler and the pinnacle of their relationship, the 1923 Munich Beer Hall Putsch, is barely touched. Neither is the Kapp Putsch of 1920.

Despite a somewhat misleading title, a tendency to explore unrelated tangents and the oversimplification of some events, *The First Nazi* is an interesting book. While written for the lay audience, it also highlights the need for a scholarly look at the impact Ludendorff had on German and world history.

## HISTORY WAR RECOMMENDS...

**Hue 1968**

**Author:** Mark Bowden **Price:** £20  
**Publisher:** Grove Press UK



Before January 1968, General William Westmoreland, the US commander in Vietnam, was confident that an American victory was close. The war would actually go on for

another seven years, largely in North Vietnam's favour. The game-changer was the Tet Offensive – a surge of Northern surprise military attacks and popular uprisings. The epicentre was Hue, Vietnam's cultural capital.

This is the focus of Mark Bowden's latest book, *Hue 1968*. The *Black Hawk Down* author examines each stage of the Battle of Hue, which lasted 24 days and cost 10,000 lives. The journalist tells the story from multiple points of view, drawing on interviews and unprecedented access to both the US and Vietnamese war archives.

## CHURCHILL

Brian Cox stands out in heavy-handed WWII drama

**Certificate** PG **Director** Jonathan Teplitzky **Cast** Brian Cox, Miranda Richardson, John Slattery, Ella Purnell **Released** 16 October

**I**n times of uncertainty and impending peril, we tend to look to our leaders, our icons, for a source of strength and hope, including those of the past.

And now, as Europe and Great Britain face uncertainty after an unparalleled period of peace, both from outside and within Europe, we unsurprisingly face an onslaught of Winston Churchill films.

In *Churchill*, Brian Cox gives an electrifying performance as the fiery prime minister in the days leading up to D-Day during World War II. In an attempt to portray a different side of arguably the most famous Briton of the 20th century, an actual historian, Alex von Tunzelmann, was hired to write the script.

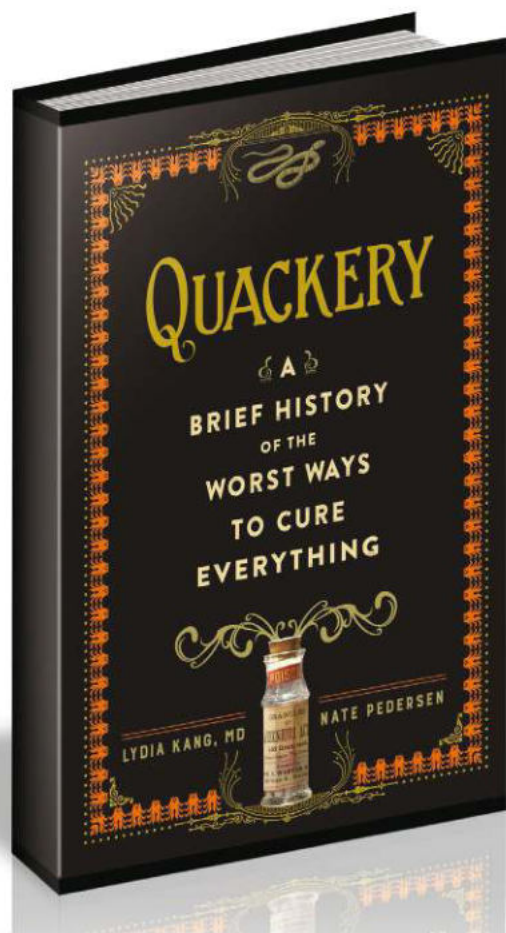
Tunzelmann focuses heavily on the combative, tempestuous and often prideful aspects of Churchill's

colourful personality as he clashes with almost everyone and is shown to have serious doubts about the viability of the French invasion plans, most effectively in personal conversations with the people closest to him. Although those are most certainly fictional conversations, they do highlight a side of Churchill rarely shown in the many hero poems that exist about him.

Everyone else feeds off Cox's volcanic energy in the role but can only do so much with characters defined by heavy-handed melodrama and poor narrative pacing. The story frequently stalls and instead of feeling like a poignant character portrait, *Churchill* feels like a stuttering conversation thriller, albeit one with an intense and gripping central performance.







## QUACKERY: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WORST WAYS TO CURE EVERYTHING

An A to Z of medicine misuse on a grand scale

**Author** Lydia Kang and Nate Pedersen **Publisher** Workman Publishing

**Price** £15.99 **Released** 17 October 2017

For as long as there's been medicine, there's been quack medicine, the roaring trade exploiting humankind's inherent desire for cure-alls. Whether a migraine, stomach ailment or that all-important search for eternal youth, men and women across the centuries have snapped up lotions and potions promising the world and returning nothing but pain and misery.

In this A to Z of medicine misuse on a grand scale, the authors – doctor Lydia Kang and freelance journalist Nate Pedersen – cheerfully wander through the realms of quackery, exploring deadly elements, dodgy doctors and barking mad diagnoses. We meet the marathon runner zombified mid-race by enormous doses of strychnine, the Victorian women who literally died to be pale and the lucky patients prescribed leech treatments... inside their bodies.

Even if you didn't ask for help, you weren't safe: one unfortunate image is of practitioners plucking

poor souls out of the Thames and inserting tobacco smoke enemas for 'resuscitation' purposes. But does it beat radium suppositories? Goat-testicle implants? While picking their way through the horrors, the authors show how misguided and dangerous practices were eventually debunked and paved the way for modern medicine.

They also note that while most quacks were out to make a quick buck, some genuinely believed in their methods – take Benjamin Rush, who believed mercury compound calomel would improve mental health, or the physicians who felt ingesting brains or skulls would cure epilepsy. You would definitely be hard pressed to make these tales boring, but the book's colloquial style adds a dash of verve and renders them quite unforgettable.

Original and clearly well researched, the gleefully grim guide serves as an excellent reminder that though we may be enchanted by the past, we probably wouldn't want to live in it.

## HOW TO READ EUROPEAN ARMOR

Your battle-ready 16th century lookbook

**Author** Donald LaRocca **Publisher** Yale University Press

**Price** £16.99 **Released** Out now

As a Medieval or early modern soldier on the battlefield, there were many tools at your disposal: lances, swords, shields, bows, horses. But perhaps the most valuable of all was your armour, which, if made well, could give you a fighting chance in those hair-raising life or death moments.

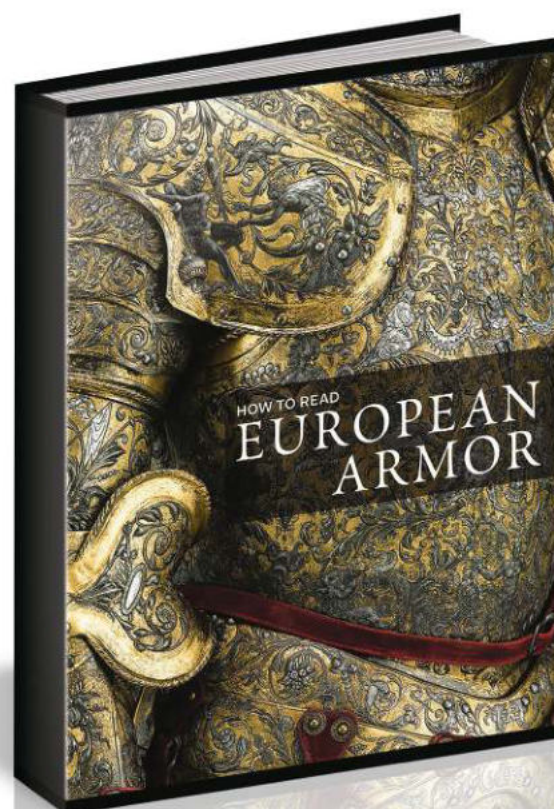
Evolved over centuries to defend against the fiercest of weapons, the knight's suit of armour was eventually rendered obsolete by the invention of gunpowder and its use saw a large decline in the 17th century. The spectacular items, once the prized possessions of kings and nobles, survive today in museums around the world and thousands of examples have pride of place in New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Written by Donald LaRocca, curator of the Met's department of arms and armour, this addition to the museum's *How to Read* series provides a fitting introduction to armour for the uninitiated, moving through the different arenas – battlefield, tournament and ceremonial – and the components making

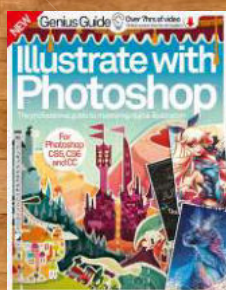
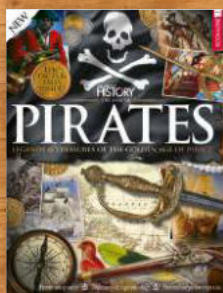
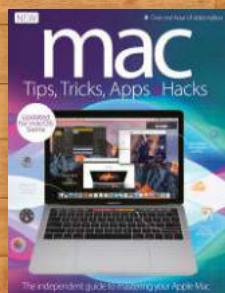
up a complete suit, from breastplates and gauntlets to tassets and knee cops. Paired with striking imagery, the guide, which is predominantly focused on the 16th century, oozes with detail but the author is careful not to overload the text with unnecessary jargon.

Practical certainly didn't mean boring for the nobility and there are many stunning examples, including Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I's religiously and politically charged suit featuring images of the Virgin Mary. There is also an in-depth look at a golden, lion-shaped helmet from Italy, which must have been a startling sight on the battlefield or in a tourney. Even horses were kitted out in splendour – there's a particularly magnificent example of armour thought to have been made for a Venetian commander's steed.

Supplemented with a lengthy reading list for those whose curiosity has been piqued, the visually arresting guide illustrates armour's gargantuan role in warfare and how vital museum collections still are to our understanding of the past.

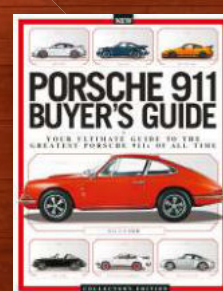
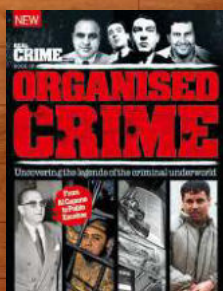
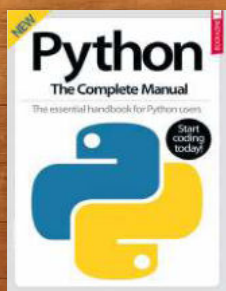






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LEONARDO DESERVE THE PRAISE HE IS GIVEN?



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Future Publishing Limited  
Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill  
Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ

#### Editorial

Editor **Jack Parsons**  
jack.parsons@futurenet.com  
01202 586279

Senior Designer **Abbi Castle**  
Features Editor **Peter Price**  
Production Editor **Katharine Marsh**  
Staff Writer **Jessica Leggett**  
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Senior Art Editor **Duncan Crook**

#### Contributors

Ella Carter, Catherine Curzon, Neil Darby, Graeme Davis, Erlingur Einarsson, Philip Ellis, Ben Gazur, Charles Ginger, Emma Kay, Matthew Moss, Jonathan O'Callaghan, Adam Rees, Dom Resleigh-Lincoln, Luis Villazon, William Welsh, Frances White, David Williamson, Tim Williamson, Willow Winsham, Beth Wyatt

#### Cover images

Joe Cummings, Getty Images, Left Bank Pictures (Television), Sol 90, Thinkstock

#### Photography and illustration

Alamy, Kevin Braburn, Ed Crooks, Rocio Espin, Nicholas Forder, Getty Images, Shutterstock, Sol 90, Thinkstock, Kym Winters

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#### Advertising

Media packs are available on request  
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**  
clare.dove@futurenet.com

Ad Manager **David Lennox**  
01225 687412  
david.lennox@futurenet.com

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#### Circulation

Circulation Director **Darren Pearce**  
01202 586200

#### Production

Head of Production US & UK **Mark Constance**  
Production Project Manager **Clare Scott**  
Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crossby**  
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**  
Production Manager **Nola Cokely**

#### Management

Commercial Finance Director **Dan Jotcham**  
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# HISTORY HOLLYWOOD

Fact versus fiction on the silver screen



## BURKE & HARE

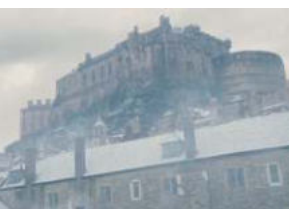
**Director:** John Landis **Starring:** Simon Pegg, Andy Serkis, Isla Fisher, Tom Wilkinson, Tim Curry  
**Country:** United Kingdom **Released:** 2010

When it comes to historical accuracy, body-snatching comedy *Burke & Hare* really is a horror movie!



**VERDICT** Accurate accents can't save this make-believe historical misfire.

**01** Things get off to a good start with an evocative recreation of Victorian Edinburgh, the stamping ground of the real Burke and Hare. Whether in the streets or the dissection room, the opulent sets are so detailed that you can practically smell the formaldehyde!



**02** The film correctly portrays Burke and Hare as having Northern Irish accents, something other adaptations of the story have frequently either forgotten or ignored. Both men were immigrants to Scotland, so they would certainly have spoken in the Ulster dialect.



**03** Danny McTavish, the villain of the movie, is an entirely fictional creation. In reality, Burke and Hare came up with the plan to sell corpses to Dr Knox themselves – there was no criminal mastermind who served as a bad influence on the pair.



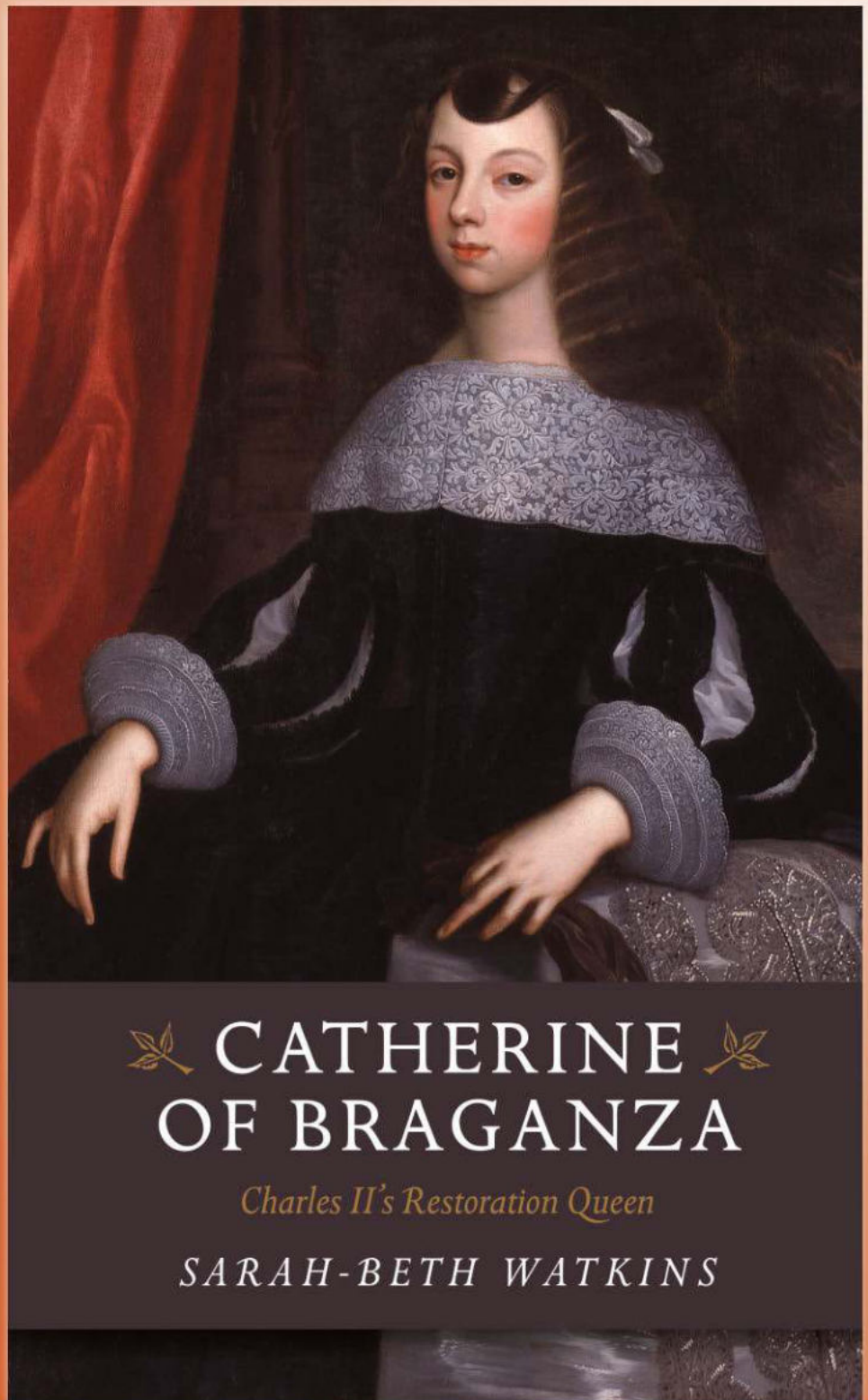
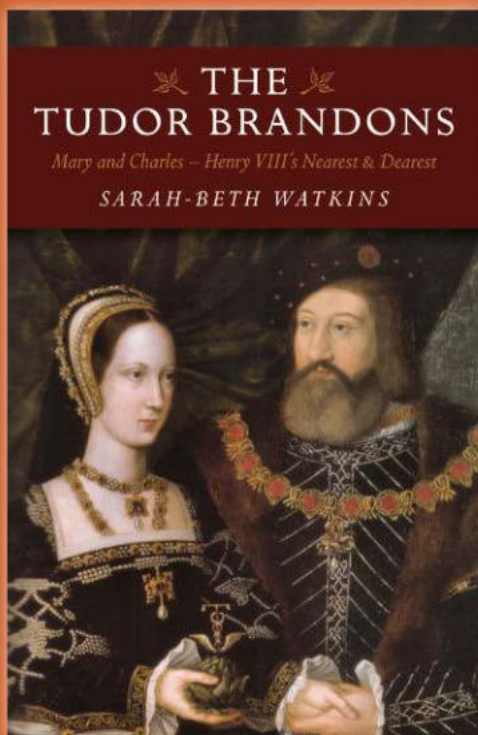
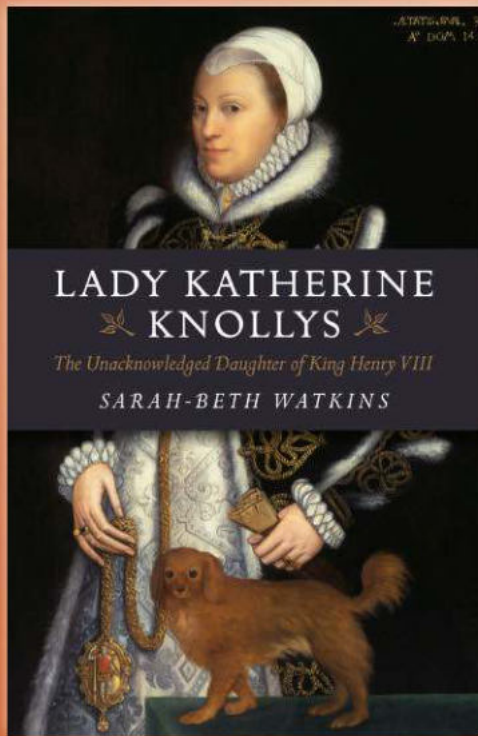
**04** Burke and Hare didn't turn to murder to pay off a blackmailer who discovered their body-snatching racket, nor was Burke abducted by the fictional McTavish. Rather than loveable rogues, the pair were killers who committed murder out of greed, not desperation.



**05** Burke's confession, which saves Hare's life, is entirely fictional. In reality, Hare turned against Burke in court and sent him to the gallows. Needless to say, Hare didn't become a funeral director to royalty either, but disappeared from the historical record.







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## The Royal Tiger

In August 1942, the German Army Weapons Agency submitted its requirements for a replacement for the Tiger. From this came the Tiger II, more commonly known as the Royal or King Tiger.

The Tiger II was utilised in the later stages of the Second World War on both the Western and Eastern Fronts. On the Western Front, the first combat unit equipped with the King Tigers was the 503rd Heavy Tank Battalion. The battalion only received 12 Tiger IIs alongside 33 Tiger Is. Arriving in Dreux on July 7, 1944, the battalion managed to destroy 12 Sherman tanks in the very first battle.

In World of Tanks, you can command the Tiger II and other members of the Tiger family in the heat of battle. World of Tanks is an online PC game dedicated to tank warfare of the mid-20th century featuring over 500 of history's most iconic tanks.

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